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Caṇḍī in Art & Iconography

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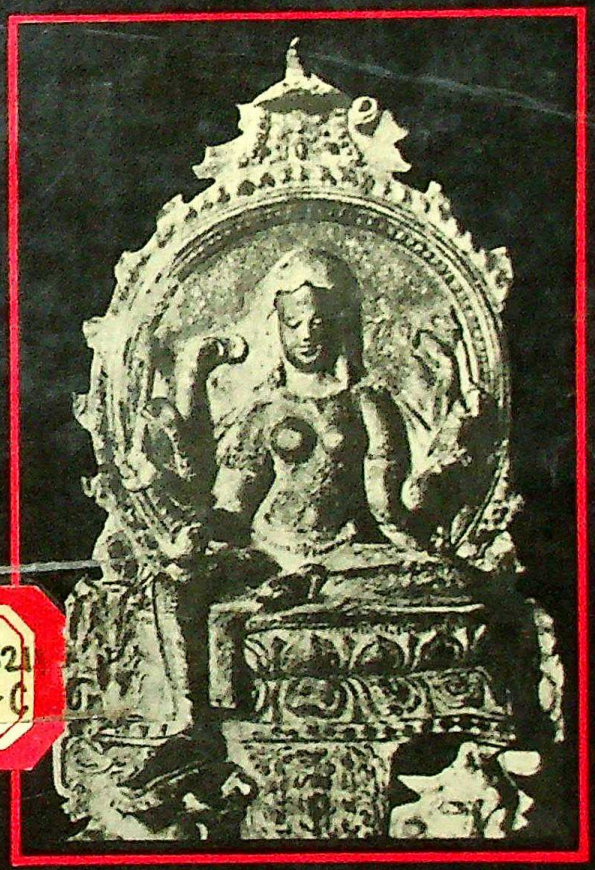
Caṇḍī in Art & Iconography



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ART AND ICONOGRAPHY

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पुस्तकालय
पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

SOMNATH MUKHOPADHYAY

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Agam Kala Prakashan
DELHI
1984

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First published 1984

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Published by Dr. Agam Prasad, M.A. Ph.D., Diploma in Museology.
for AGAM KALA PRAKASHAN
34 Central Market, Ashok Vihar,
Delhi -110052
Phone : 7 11 33 95

Printed by Gee Ess Printers at Mohan Printing Corporation, 8/238, Delhi.

Plates printed at Raj Press,
R-3 Inderpuri, New Delhi.

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INSCRIBED
IN
LOVING MEMORY
OF
RAMPATI MUKHERJEE
WHOSE FATHERLY AFFECTION
WAS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION
TO ME

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Foreword

THE WORK to which these words are being added by way of an introduction is meant to bring to the notice of the academic circle the nature and background of a deity which has been enjoying a very wide popularity in Bengal for quite an extent of time. The complexes which have contributed to the growth and promotion of culture among the vast masses of people of our country are of a very diverse nature and provide very interesting scope of study. Not much endeavour has been made to go into the details about these complexes, the diversities of which had been successfully fused into a culture of caleidoscopic nature synthesised into a composite whole. This synthesis had provided all contributing groups their place of honour and respectability securing for them a feeling of oneness within the integrated whole. Today when exigencies of economic and political nature tend to exploit the diversities in the multi-dimensional constituents of the society, it becomes increasingly pertinent to take a critical appraisal of the philosophy involved in the processes through which people of different ethnic groups having diverse cultures, beliefs and life styles were brought into a unified whole within which each of those could find a happy and reverential position. The cult of Caṇḍī provides one evidence of such an acculturation in the social perspective of Bengal, having been accepted in the orthodox fold to be provided with a position of considerable veneration and high responsibility. The name Caṇḍī seems to have been evolved from the austric word *Caṇḍa* indicating strength and hardness compliant with rock which in part as stone finds great veneration among many tribal groups of people as symbolic of the ultimate power and which had been admitted in orthodox fold as symbolic in the Lingam in case of god Śiva and the stones symbolising the Mātrikās in village sanctuaries. The name Caṇḍī in every possibility finds mentioned for the first time in the Bhīshma-parva of the *Mahābhārata* where she is invoked as one and the same with the great mother goddess Durgā who is also known by such other names as Kālī (the dark also implicating Kāla i.e. Time having no end), Kapālī (who wears garland of skulls) or

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Kāntāravāsinī (dweller of forest) all indicating acceptance of a wide variety of unorthodox entities within the orthodox fold having been given high veneration and respectability. The acceptance of the female concept as an object of commensurate veneration along with the supreme entity conceived as a male and transgressing the same to be accorded the highest supremacy had become widely popular as obtained in the Tāntric concept, and this phenomenon had played a very significant role in the cultural traditions of a wide cross section of people of this country. Though not met elsewhere as having gained any great credence, Caṇḍī had come to acquire a place of great eminence in Bengal and the background of her gaining this eminence seems to be a saga of highly romantic nature. This study stands to provide a very wide canvas of the egalitarian character of the culture pattern evolved in India throughout the ages, unique in its capability of homogenising and absorbing ideas, conceptions, practices and formulations of widest possible comprehension.

It has been a privilege on my part to share with the author the pleasures of viewing this interesting subject being thrashed with considerable care and objectivity bearing out in great depth the whole background of the phenomenal rise of Caṇḍī as a deity of wide popularity in Bengal. He has covered the complex behind the cult of Mother goddess in the Indian background and has given a very well reasoned survey of the rise of the goddess Caṇḍī particulary in Bengal. The way in which the goddess came to be associated in the popular tradition with agriculture and trade has been adequately probed into while the dissemination of the popularity of Caṇḍī over wide areas has been pointed out with knowledge gained through painstaking field work. The work may be pailed as a very praiseworthy study of the culture pattern prevalent among the lay masses of people who gained great sustenance, courage and joy of life from this reverential entity and not just a folk-deity as Caṇḍī had gained in stature and dimension.

It is indeed a great pleasure on my part to witness the work come out in print and I hope it will be read with interest by those who have a fascination to know Indian traditions in depth.

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56E, Kankulia Road,
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January 4, 1984

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Preface

THE PRESENT monograph which deals with the history of the cult of goddess Caṇḍī is the outcome of my research work. The purpose of the present work is to represent a general study about the goddess Caṇḍī and an attempt is made to highlight the historical development of the same through the ages in Bengal. My primary endeavour has been to trace the origin of the cult of Caṇḍī, study the religious background and the popular lores behind the cult and the numerous representations of the deity in sculpture and painting preserved in Bengal and the neighbouring areas.

While selecting the subject of present study, I was mainly attracted by the colourful *paṭas* of Bengal found displayed in the show cases of different museums. I noticed that very limited work has so far been done on this tradition and the art associated with it and thought that a detailed study on the subject might bring about various facets of the art and culture prevalent in this part of India from an early age.

The present study has two aspects—historical and artistic treatment of the material available in different museums. The method adopted for the study of the subject has been mainly based on Indian literature, records, previous works done by different scholars on the subject published in journals, catalogues and books and a detailed study of the specimens of art found preserved in different museums of Bengal, Bihar and Bangladesh. In this connection I have particularly taken note of the representation of the goddess found in the following museums: Indian Museum, Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Museum of the Directorate of State Archaeology, Government of West Bengal, Gurusaday Museum of Folk Art, Museum of the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Parishad all in Calcutta, etc.

The monograph is divided into five chapters. The first chapter gives an account of the goddess as known from Purāṇic traditions in general. This account has been based on various literary sources as well as archaeological evidences tracing the link of the deity with conceptions found from the period of the Indus valley civilization. Attempt has also been made in this chapter to trace the general tradition of the cult of Mother-goddess in India through long ages of history.

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The second chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the popular story of the goddess Caṇḍī found in the *Maṅgalkāvyas* of Bengal and their authorship. In the kāvyas there are two distinct parts dealing with the exploits of goddess, and the second part of the chapter concerns itself with the relationship between the two stories of this popular account.

The third chapter deals with the socio-cultural background of the tradition. In this chapter has been recounted the background of the tradition in which can be traced both brāhmanical and non-brāhmanical elements latent in the society and effort has been made to study these in some detail.

The fourth chapter deals with the study of the artistic expression of the Caṇḍī lore as preserved in sculpture and painting, showing on the one hand the images and their various iconographic peculiarities and on the other visual representations of the Caṇḍī saga. Attempt has also been made in this chapter to trace the different places or locations associated with the cult of Caṇḍī in different parts of Eastern India. The results of enquiries made in the above chapters are summed up in chapter five.

I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. K.K. Ganguli of University of Calcutta, for extending his valued guidance throughout the work, without which this effort would have not been possible. His Foreword to this work has enriched it. It is my privilege to record my indebtedness to Dr. B.N. Mukherjee, University of Calcutta, who initiated me in researches and provided necessary facilities.

I have received in course of my relevant research valuable advices and suggestions from Prof. S.K. Saraswati and Prof. D.P. Ghosh. The co-operation rendered by Sri Assem Sarkar, Sri Kalyan Chatterjee of Rural Bengal Association, Sri Asok Nath Chatterjee of Indian National Bibliography, Sri Pradyot Roychowdhury, Librarian Charu Chandra College, Calcutta and Dr. Ranabir Chakravarti, Lecturer, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Visbha Bharati, Santiniketan, are gratefully acknowledged.

I am thankful to the authorities of different libraries and museums for their co-operations and help. Thanks are also due to Dr. S. S. Biswas, without whose deep interest the work would not have been published.

The author takes this opportunity to thank Dr. Agam Prasad of the Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi for undertaking the publication of the monograph.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not record here the inspiration and cooperation I received from my wife Dr. Santipriya Mukhopadhyay, in bringing out this monograph.

University of Calcutta
August, 1983

SOMNATH MUKHOPADHYAY

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List of Abbreviations

ABSOBL	Dasgupta, T.C., *Aspects of Bengalee Society from Old Bengali Literature*
ASIAR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*
ASM	*Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhañj*
AV	*Atharva Veda*
BI	Ray, N.R., *Bāṅgalīr Itihāsa*
BMKI	Bhattacharyya, A. *Bāṅglā Maṅgal Kāvyer Itihāsa*
Bhav.	*Bhaviṣya Purāṇa*
Boudh. Dh. S.	*Boudhāyana Dharma Sūtra*
BVP	*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*
CARMVRS	*Catalogue of the Archaeological Relics in the Museum of the Varendra Research Society*
CHACIM	*Catalogue and Handbook of the Archaeological Collections in the Indian Museum*
DBI	Mitra, R.C., *Decline of Buddhism in India*
Dbh.	*Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*
DHI	Banerjea, J.N., *Development of Hindu Iconography*
DM	*Devī Māhātmya*
DŞ	*Durgā Śaptaśatī*
DVP	*Devī Purāṇa*
EHB	Paul, P.E., *Early History of Bengal*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica*
EIC	Mackay, E., *Early Indus Civilization*
EISMS	Banerjee, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*
ERE	*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*
GNB	Getty, A., *Gods of Northern Buddhism*

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HB	Majumdar, R.C. (ed.) *History of Bengal*
HBLL	Sen, D.C., *History of Bengali Language and Literature*
HCIP	Majumdar, R.C. (ed.) *The History and Culture of the Indian People*
HIIA	Coomaraswamy, A.K. *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*
HSMVSP	*Handbook to the Sculptures in the Museum of Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad*
H. Vam.	*Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*
IBBSDM	Bhattasali, N.K., *Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*
IBI	Bhattacharya, B., *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
JASB (NS)	*Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal (New Series)*
JGIS	*Journal of the Greater India Society*
JRAS	*Journal af the Royal Asiatic Society*
KC	Sen, D.C. (ed.), *Kavikaṅkan Caṇḍī*
KP	*Kālikā Purāṇa*
MIC	Marshall, J.H., *Mohenjodaro and Indus Civilization*
MISBM	Chanda, R.P., *Mediaeval Indian Sculpture in the British Museum*
Mark. P.	*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*
Mbh.	*Mahābhārata*
Mahabag	*Mahābhāgavate Purāṇa*
Mund	*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*
NRC	Dasgupta, S.B., *Obscure Religious Cults*
PS	*Parāśara Saṁhitā*
RV	*Ṛgveda*
Rmn.	*Rāmāyaṇa*
SCARMVRS	*Supplementary Catalogue of the Archaeological Relics in the Varendra Research Society*
SPP	*Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā*
San, Gr. S.	*Sāṅkhyāyana Gṛhya Sūtra*
San. Sr. S.	*Sāṅkhāyana Srauta Sūtra*
SB	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*
TA	*Taittirīya Āraṅyaka*
TB	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*
TS	*Taittirīya Saṁhitā*
V. Sam.	*Vājasneyī Saṁhitā*
VP	*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following institutions and individuals for having received the illustrations, included in this monograph, through their courtesies. I gratefully acknowledge this and thank them all.

Archaeological Survey of India, Museums Branch, Calcutta
Ashutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University
Indian Museum, Calcutta
Directorate of State Archaeology, West Bengal
Rural Bengal Association, Calcutta
Professor S.K. Saraswati
Malda Municipal Museum, Malda

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

THE HISTORY of the worship of famale deities in India goes back to a remote past, as early literary evidence from the Vedic period downwards and the excavations at *Moheñjodāro*, *Harappā* and other places would amply indicate. But the conception of a central goddess revered as *Devī* or *Śakti*, to whom all other female deities were affiliated as her parts or incarnations, and the Purāṇic works dealing the concept of the deity, her nature, exploits and mode of worship were matters of comparatively later origin. As a matter of fact, there have been *Mahāpurāṇas* dealing with the rites, customs and faiths of the Brāhmaṇas, Pāñcarātras and Pāśupatas for long, even from the early days of the Christian era, but not a single work of this class has ever dealt exhaustively or even principally with *Śakti*-worship, although chapters on the praise and worship of different forms of Devī are to be found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, *Vāmana Purāṇa*, *Varāha Purāṇa*, *Kūrma Purāṇa*[1] and such other principal Purāṇas of the Brāhmanical pantheon.

At a comparatively later age there grew up a number of Śākta *Upapurāṇas* of note, of which the following have come down to us : the *Devī Purāṇa*, *Kālikā Purāṇa*, *Mahābhāgavata*, *Devī Bhāgavata*, *Caṇḍī Purāṇa* (or *Caṇḍikā Purāṇa*). It may be mentioned here that these Upapurāṇas very often deal with the central goddess referred to as Devī and sometimes to one or other of her principal forms such as *Durgā*, *Kālī* (or *Kālikā*), *Caṇḍī*, *Satī*, etc., although the growing popularity of the conception of *Śakti* in India inspired people to look upon every female deity as a *Śakti* (Active Energy) of a particular male god, to whom she was associated, very often as a wife.

1. See *Mārk. P.* 81-93; *Mbh.* IV. 6 and VI. 23 (containing hymns to Durgā) and *Harivaṁśa* II, chaps. 2-4 and 22 (in which Devī has been praised).

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We have already mentioned the names of *Śākta Upapurāṇas* which are still extant, and from our examination of these works we shall see that all of these were not written at the same time or at the same place. Hence the question arises as to why the people of later ages felt encouraged to write new purāṇic works or chapters on *Śakti*-worship, although they had inherited works of similar nature from their predecessors. In the following pages we shall try to answer this question before we proceed to analyse the individual *Upapurāṇas*.

We have seen that the beliefs and ideas of the people of Eastern India had encouraged them to compose new verses and even write new purāṇic works in order to furnish these beliefs and ideas with a śāstric basis. People of other regions also must have made similar attempts for the spread of Śakti-worship. But this was not only the cause of composition of new works and chapters on *Śakti*-worship in later days. There were other reasons, which will be evident from the following survey of the rise of Purāṇic Śaktism in India.

There is no denying of the fact that in *Devī*, as we have her now, we have glimpses of some Vedic deities, especially the earth-goddess *Pṛthivī*, but it must be admitted that in her present character she is pre-eminently a deity of non-Vedic origin. Modern research has made it sufficiently known that worship of the Mother goddess in some form or other, prevailed from very ancient times among the different races and tribes, living in the vast tract of land extending from Greece to India. According to Sir John Marshall, 'female statuetes akin to those from the Indus valley and Baluchistan have been found in large numbers and over a wide area between Persia and the Aegean, notably in Elam, Mesopotamia, Transcaspia, Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine, Cyprus, Crete, the Cyelades, the Balkans and Egypt.[2] The *Mahābhārata*[3], the *Harivaṁśa*[4] and the Purāṇas[5] tell us that in early times female deities of different[6] forms and names were worshipped in different parts of India by the followers of the Vedas as well as by the *Śavaras*, *Barbaras*, *Pulindas*, *Kirātas*, and many other non-Aryan tribes.[7] These female deities appear in these works generally as divine mothers[8] associated as spouses with particular male gods, but in a number of cases also as virgin-deities sporting on mountain tops. Thus they came to be held as the original source of the divine mothers. Thus *Durgī* or *Durgā*, a great mountain-goddess associated very

2. Marshall, J., *M.I.C.*, Vol. I, p. 50.
3. *Mbh.*, IV (Virāṭa-parvan) ch. 6 and VI (Bhīṣma P.) ch. 23.
4. *Harivaṁśa* II (Viṣṇu Purāṇa) chs. 2-4 and 22.
5. Viz., *Mārk. P.* chs. 81-93.
6. *Harivaṁśa* II.2.49—*tatah sthāna-sahasrais tvaṁ pṛthivīṁ sobhayiṣyasi* (spoken of Vindhyavāsinī).
7. *Harivaṁśa* II.3.66.70; *Devī P.* 39.142. According to the *Kālikā P.*, ch. 39 Kāmarūpa is a seat of Devī worship, even when it was inhabited by Kirātas.
8. The number of the Divine Mothers is generally given as eight or sixteen.

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often with the Himālayas is called a virgin in early sources such as the *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* and the *Mahābhārata*[9] ; *Vindhyavāsinī* also appears as a virgin deity in all works ; and in the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Devī* and other *Purāṇas*, *Devī* whether identified with *Umā* or with *Vindhyavāsinī* is found as a killer of the demons in her virgin state. It is highly probable that the non-Aryan tribes mentioned above had a matriarchal system of society[10] and that it was due to this system that the custom of worshipping female deities grew among them. In spite of the spread of the Aryan population in India, a large section of the members of these tribes, who lived in impenetrable mountains and forests[11] and were thus able to maintain their freedom and individuality, used to worship, as they still do, their deities in these inaccessible parts of the country[12] with offerings of wine, meat and other things. It is highly probable that on these occasions of worship of the deities they sacrificed human beings,[13] drank wine[14], indulged in mystic revels, and practised sexual promiscuity.[15]

The aboriginal tribes seem to have worshipped their female deities mainly for protection against ferocious wild beasts.[16] They also appear to have believed that these deities were able to protect them from all kinds of danger and to confer on them wealth and prosperity as well as victory in war.[17] As a matter of fact, the occasions for Devī's appearance on the Himālayas and the Vindhya, as given in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, *Devī Purāṇa*, etc., show that she is conceived in these works primarily as a war-goddess, with whom other female deities were identified. The name of *Śākambharī* attributed to the goddess in some of the sources, as well as her story given in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, (92.42-46) and the fact that *Durgā* is called *Kāntāravāsinī* and is said to protect those who fall in trouble (*avasanna*) in deep forests, tend to show that there were some female deities who were looked upon by the aborigines as vegetation spirits. It should be mentioned here that the character

9. *TA* X.1.; *Mbh.* IV. 6.7,14, VI. 23.4.
10. Chanda, R.P., *Indo-Aryan Races*, pp. 153-156.
11. *AV* X. 4. 14.
12. *Mbh.* VI. 23. 11b-14; *Devi. P* 17. 17 and 17.23.
13. *Kālikā-P.* ch. 7.71. Reference is made in the *Daśa-kumāra-carita* (Pūrva-pīṭhikā, Ucchvāsa I) and other works to the sacrifice of human beings to deities by Kirātas, Śavaras and other tribes.
14. *Mbh.* IV. 6. 176. ; *Devi. P.* 9.56.
15. *Devi. P.* 39. 142; *Kālikā P.* 62-31, 63. 18.
16. *Harivaṁśa* II 3. 7-8. ; *Devi P.* 17.26 ; *Mārk. P.* 92. 25.29. In southern Bengal a deity popularly called Dakshin Ray is worshipped by villagers for getting rid of the havoc created by Royal Bengal tigers of the Sundarvans. This deity has an ugly face very much like that of a tiger but its body is that of a human being.
17. The conception of Devī as a war-goddess is certainly not of very late origin. In *Mbh.* VI. 23.4 and 8 Durgā is called '*Siddhasenānī*' and *raṇa-priyā*—see also *Mārk. P.* chps. 81 ff.

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of *Devī* as a war-goddess explains why she is to be worshipped in autumn and spring, which seasons are highly favourable for military expeditions.

We do not know the number of names of the female deities originally worshipped by these aboriginal tribes, and among the *Śākta* deities of the Purāṇas and Tantras there are certainly some who owe their origin to the deification of abstract ideas; but it admits of little doubt that many of the *Śākta* deities mentioned in the Purāṇas and Tantras, viz., *Umā*, *Kauśikī*, *Vindhyavāsinī*, *Durgā*, *Caṇḍī*, *Kālī*, *Kālikā*, *Cāmuṇḍā*, *Śākambharī* and other, were modelled on the popular ones, especially those associated with mountains, viz. Himālaya and Vindhya. It is worthwhile to note that the comparatively early Vedic works do not betray in any way recognition, or even knowledge of these Śākta deities, nor do they speak of the lion as a mount of any of these goddesses. On the other hand, in the *Harivaṁśa Devī* is said to have been worshipped as *Vindhyavāsinī* by *Śavaras*, *Barbaras* and *Pulindas* as accompanied by cocks, goats, sheeps, lions and tigers, and making a high and continuous sound with her bell.[18]

Of whatever nature the female deities of the aboriginal tribes may have been, they were not allowed an easy access into the Brāhmanical pantheon. The military spirit of the Vedic Aryans as well as their deep-rooted feeling of antagonism towards the natives stood in the way of their having any regard for the deities of the latter. As a matter of fact, none of the names of the different forms of *Durgā* is found mentioned in the Vedic *Saṁhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas*. It was only at a much later date that the deities of the aboriginal people began to be admitted in the Brāhmanical tradition by a very slow process of assimilation. In the different texts of the Yajurveda as well as in its *Brāhmaṇas* there are, of course, passages in which *Ambikā*, has been mentioned and often called *Rudra's* sister[19] and once his mother as well,[20] but in these passages *Ambikā*, unlike *Durgā* and other *Śākta* deities[21] of the Purāṇas, Tantras, etc., has been allotted a share of the sacrificial offerings. She therefore, does not seem to have been derived from a mother goddess of the non-Aryan tribes. According to the *Kaṭhaka-saṁhitā*, *Maitrayanī saṁhitā* and *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa*, this Ambikā, sister of Rudra, was the autumn season (*śarada*) personified. The two *saṁhitās* further tell us that as Rudra followed his sister *Ambikā*, who was identical with autumn, his work of killing reached its climax in this season. The *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa*, on the other hand, says that, it was with his sister Ambikā appearing as śarat that Rudra carried out his work of killing. So, commenting respectively on *Taittarīya-brāhmaṇa* (I.6.10.4) and *Vājasaneyī saṁhitā* (3.57) *Śīyāna* and *Mahīdhara*

18. For the relevant verses of the *Harivaṁśa* see foot-note 16 above.
19. *TS.* I. 8.6.1. ; *TB.* I. 6.10.4.
20. *Maitrayanī saṁhitā* I. 10.20.
21. *Hiraṇyakeśi-gṛhya-sūtra* (II. 8.7.)

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described Ambikā as a cruel deity (*krūra devatā*) like Rudra and say that Ambikā helped Rudra in his slaughter by appearing as *śarat* and creating fever and other diseases. As a matter of fact, the autumn season (*śarada*) has been looked upon from the early Vedic period as the most dangerous part of the year, so much so that a person who could pass this season safely was taken to be out of danger for the remaining part of the year, and often the age of a person was expressed and the years counted in terms of the autumn seasons passed, and that this season was mentioned in blessing one with, or aspiring for one a long life.[22] So the identification of *Ambikā* with *śarada* can by no means be taken to indicate that she was originally a harvest deity and that her identification with *Durgā* gave rise to the widespread custom of the latter's worship in autumn.

On the other hand, it appears that the custom of worshipping *Durgā* mainly as a war-goddess in autumn owed its origin much more to her identification with the cruel and destructive deity *Ambikā* than to the suitability of this season for war expeditions, because it was quite natural for the warriors to believe that by propitiating *Durgā* with worship and animal sacrifice they could escape death and also create havoc on their enemies. The connection of *Durgā* with harvest, though coming from an early date, decidedly forms a comparatively later phase in her character as a deity.

But the case with the Goddess known by the name *Umā* is quite different. Her peculiar name her association with a mountain, and her mount (*vāhana*), a lion seems to be originally the same as the *Ommo*[23], who was none other than a mother goddess. This *Umā* is neither mentioned in any of the Vedic *saṁhitās* and Brāhmaṇas nor allowed any share of the sacrificial offerings. Even in the story of the destruction of *Dakṣa's* sacrifice as given in the *Mahābhārata*,[23a] it is only Śiva, and not his consort Pārvatī, who is promised a share in the sacrifice. The earliest works mentioning Umā are the *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* and the *Kena-upaniṣad*. In the former work Umā as well as Ambikā is associated with Rudra, who is there called Ambikāpati and Umāpati[24] and in the latter she is called Haimavatī[25] (daughter of or belonging to Himavat). The *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* mentions Durgī also, but call her Kaṇyā-kumārī (the virgin). So, according to the *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* Umā and Durgī were different. It is highly probable that originally this Durgī was, like Umā, a mountain goddess

22. See for instance, *ṚV* I. 72.3 ; 89. 9. II. 27. 10 III. 36. 10 and also *Raghuvaṁśa* 10.1 ; *Mālavikāgnimitra* I. 15 etc.
23. The goddess appears as 'Ommo' in Huviṣka's coin.
23a. *Mbh.* XII/283-4.
24. *TA*. X. 1. and X. 18.
25. *Kena Upaniṣad* 3. 12. *Sa tasmin evākāsa striyam ājagāma bahusobhamānāṁ umāṁ haimavatīṁ tāṁ hovāca....*

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connected with the Himālayas. In the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*[25a] Kālī and Karālī are given as the names of two of the seven tongues of Agni. These references indicate that towards the end of Vedic period, some female deities of non-Vedic origin began to be associated with the Vedic gods in various ways, and that Umā was the first non-Aryan deity to be regarded as the wife of a Vedic god, whose character had already been much modified by the assimilation of alien characteristics. But during this period, the relationship between Rudra and Umā was of a very ordinary nature, like that between a husband and his wife, and it was not characterised by the relationship between Puruṣa and Prakṛti of Sāṁkhya system or Brahma and Māyā of the Vedānta.

Towards the end of the vedic period the high spirit of domination by military power and of maintenance of racial and cultural distinction by the Vedic Aryans began to cool down to a very great extent, and there was growing tendency towards cultural assimilation. Now, the work of assimilation was mainly taken up by the authors of the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇic works, who believed deeply in the theory of rebirth, gave a very high place to the Sāṁkhya and Vedānta systems of philosophy, and explained the nature of the gods and goddesses and the universe through a fusion of the principles of these two systems. These authors had much broader views than the orthodox followers of the Vedic religion and unlike the Vedic Aryans, tried to bring the antagonistic non-Aryans into the Aryan fold by making a wise compromise between the Vedic and non-Vedic ideas. But as no female deity could be given a pre-eminent position in the recognized pantheon without going against the Vedic tradition and the principles of Sāṁkhya and Vedānta, they connected some of their female deities with Śiva and some with Viṣṇu and explained the relationship of these gods and goddesses with the principles of Sāṁkhya and Vedānta. We have already mentioned that in the *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka* Umā, an original Himālayan deity was connected in a very general way with Rudra. So, Umā was already recognised as a Brāhmanical deity. This well-established position of Umā tempted the Śaivite authors of later ages to regard her as the Prakṛti and Māyā of Śiva and to look upon the other goddesses as different forms of Umā. The Vaiṣṇava authors, on the other hand, picked up Vindhyavāsinī, the most prominent among the female deities connected with the Vindhyas, and had linked her with Viṣṇu by taking her to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu's *Yoga-nidrā* (or *Yogamāyā*). With this *Yoga-nidrā* the Vaiṣṇavas seem to have identified a deity of the Ābhīras also. It is probable that like the people of Punic Africa, Egypt, Phoenicia, Asia Minor and Greece of early times, the Ābhiras also worshipped a maiden (unwed) goddess with a young subordinate god. Ābhiras association with this goddess was ceased to be first, the mother of her companion by immaculate conception, and then of the gods and all alike by the embrace of her own son, because such an idea was

25a. *Muṇḍ.* I/2/4.

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repulsive to the people of India, but the young subordinate god was identified with Viṣṇu and the goddess with the maiden Vindhyavāsinī, who also was connected with Viṣṇu as his *Yogamāyā*. So, through the story of Kṛṣṇa's birth, the votaries of Viṣṇu managed to include both the Ābhiras and the worshippers of Vindhyavāsinī into their fold. In the course of time, however, people conceived of a central Devī to represent Prakṛti and Māyā of Sāṁkhya and Vedānta philosophies respectively and all the goddesses (including Umā, Vindhyavāsinī, etc.) to be her different forms assumed at different times. But being encouraged by their firm faith in the non-duality of God, as well as by their spirit of sectarian rivalry, the Śaivas claimed that this Central Devī was none other than Umā and that Vindhyavāsinī, Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā and other goddesses were just Umā's incarnations. The Vaiṣṇavas, on the other hand said, that she was Viṣṇu's *Yogamāyā* who manifested herself as Umā, Satī, Kālī etc. for the good of the world. These contending sectaries fabricated various kinds of stories often in conformity with their philosophical principles to support and popularise their respective views.

Caṇḍī in Purāṇic Tradition

We shall now proceed to examine the Purāṇas individually, viz. (i) *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (ii) *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (iii) *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (iv) *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* (v) *Devī Purāṇa* and (vi) *Kālikā Purāṇa*.

The *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* mentions that Śakti has been manifested in various forms such as Sarasvatī, Durgā, Lakṣmī and so on. The most important cult-deity of this purāṇa happens to be Rāḍha.[26] A few hymns in this Purāṇa are also devoted to the praise of Kālī and Bhadra Kālī, both representing the fierce aspects of Śakti.[27] Śakti is called the great mother and *mūlaprakṛti* out of which evolves the whole universe. It is held to be the real essence and ultimate substratum of all that exists.[28] Besides being manifestations of Śakti or Prakṛti all the goddesses are said to have sprung from the same source. In every creation of the universe, it is said, the Mūlaprakṛti assumes different gradations of *Aṁśarūpinī*, *Kālārūpinī* and *Kalyāṇasvarūpiṇī*. The *Mūlaprakṛti* manifests herself in parts and further sub-divisions.[29]

The chief *aṁśas* of the power are stated to be Gaṅgā, Manasā, Saṣṭhī, Maṅgalā, Caṇḍikā and Kālī.[30] The principal Kalās are *Svāhā*, *Svadhā* etc. and these are held as secondary goddesses.

Besides this derivation of Prakṛti or Śakti from the Supreme power and all other goddesses being held as of secondary origin from her, she is contemplated as

26. *BVP*. Brahma-Khaṇḍa chs. 5.48-55. Prakṛti Khaṇḍa chs. 48-56.
27. *Ibid.*, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa chs. 36-37.
28. *Ibid.*, Prakṛti Khaṇḍa 2. 66; 7.10.
29. *Ibid.*, 1. 54-56.
30. *Ibid.*, II. 1.1-155.

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comprising all essence in her. She is not only declared to be one with her male counterpart, but also is said to be residing in all things ; rather besides her there is nothing.[31]

Bhaviṣya Purāṇa is considered the last of the Purāṇas and deals mostly with *Vratas* to be performed for the propitiation of the Devī. Various goddesses have been praised in this text and their worship is recommended. Śakti is called the mother of the world—and the creator of all the Lokas, gods, sages and human beings.[32] She is also depicted as Vaiṣṇavī, the remover of fear and giver of auspicious knowledge to all. This Purāṇa describes most of the auspicious forms of Devī, viz. Lalitā, Bhavānī, Gaurī, Umā, Satī, Maṅgalā and Kamalā.[33] Here the goddess is described as having a very beautiful form, possessing four hands, sitting in meditation; wearing the skin of a dear, having matted hair and adorned with variety of ornaments; thus she may be called Mahālakṣmī.[34] She is said to be one with Śiva.[35] Accounts of her battles against demons are also given here in detail. A close study of the purāṇa shows that the cult of Śakti was already in an advanced state and she was by and large held in respect by the women-folk as the principal object of devotion and worship.[36]

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* is held as one of the oldest among the Purāṇas and was compiled and edited in the present form in the Gupta period or perhaps some time later.[37] There is one complete book consisting of 13 chapters named as *Durgā Saptaśatī* and *Devī Māhātmya* in this Purāṇa. Indian religious traditions by common consent bestowed the status of a scripture of the highest sanctity and efficacy on these 13 chapters. The text is of deep soul-stiring value in which the supreme principle of Reality has been invoked and glorified under the name of Devī. The *Devī Māhātmya* is an elaboration of the concept of Devī of the Vedic doctrine,[38] of an all powerful Goddess, of supreme transcendence, as propounded in the Āmbhṛṇī Sūkta[39] and Dākṣāyaṇī Sūkta.[40]

The Purāṇic text of the *Saptaśatī* speaks of the goddess Caṇḍī, who represents a consolidated idea of different aspects of the divine truth as divine power. Here the mother goddess identified as Umā or Pārvatī is held as associated with the Himālayas.[41] As the ancient Indian tradition goes, Umā as the ancient Mother

31. *BVP*. II. 2.6 12; 73-76.
32. *Bhav*., Pratisarga Parva 3-12, 17-19.
33. *Ibid*., 3. 12. 109; 3. 25. 4-6.
34. *Bhav*. Uttara Parva 25. 31-32; 10; 41.1-18.
35. *Ibid*., 18. 15-18; 3. Brahmottara Khaṇḍa 13. 44-51.
36. *Ibid*., 24-35; 23. 12-13.
37. Agarwal, V.S. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa—A study*, p. 19.
38. Agarwal, V.S. *DM*., p. 156.
39. *ṚV*. 10. 125.
40. *Ibid*., 10. 72.
41. *Saptaśatī*, XI. 42.

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goddess is always held as a mountain goddess, the most popular epithet applied to her being Pārvatī, literally, the maiden pertaining to the mountain. Though she is mainly associated with the Himālayas, she is also associated, in her different aspects, with the mountains such as Kailāśa, Vindhya, Mandāra etc.[42]

The first thing that strikes one about the mother goddess Caṇḍī or Caṇḍikā, as she is depicted in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa is that she is a warrior goddess[43] incarnating herself on earth by using various devices at various crucial moments in order to destroy the demons who held formidable challenge to the dwellers of heaven.[44]

Indeed, in her perfect nature, she has been described as the most beneficient; but her fierceness as an all-destroying war-goddess is dominant in the main episodes and we always find her as killing the demons. The tradition of the fierce goddess, equipped with the sharpest of weapons and revelling in her terror-striking war cries[45], is definitely derived from a different tradition from that of Pārvatī or Umā whom we always find in a benign and benevolent disposition. It is however interesting to note that though the goddess is mentioned as having many names, some of which are quite popular while others may be held as obscure in the Purāṇa, her most popular name Umā is not found in this text at all. Even the epithet Pārvatī occurs and is used only in the sense of a goddess residing in the mountain[46] and not in the sense of a daughter of the mountain. It has also to be noticed in this Purāṇa, that the goddess Caṇḍikā is not associated with the Himālayas in any intimate way. Of the three mountain episodes narrating the fight of the goddess (Devī) with demons, it is only in the third episode that the goddess is described as a maiden residing in a valley of the mountain Himālaya.[47] We find that the gods, after being defeated, humiliated, and oppressed by the demon brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha went to the Himālayas, with a view to approach the goddess Caṇḍikā to help them by killing the demons. Also in the second episode, the mountain Himālaya has been mentioned once, while he presented to the goddess Devī a lion, as her mount, and other riches.[48] This is all that we hear of the Himālayas in the whole of the *Devī Māhātmya*.

In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* the goddess Durgā is pure consciousness, (*cita*)[49] the power of Śiva[50] and the Māyā of Viṣṇu.[51] She is the epitome of the three primordial

42. *Saptaśatī* XI. 42.
43. *Ibid.*, XI. 41-55.
44. *Ibid.*, XII. 28-30 ; 23 ; 15. 19.
45. *Ibid.*, XI. 31-41.
46. *Ibid.*, IX. 31-41.
47. *Ibid.*, 5.88; 90; 6.8.
48. *Ibid.*, 2. 29.
49. *Ibid.*, V. 78-80, 17-19.
50. *Ibid.*, XI. 14.
51. *Ibid.*, V. 14, 16.

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guṇas (qualities) *Sattva*, *Raja* and *Tama*. She is Prakṛtī, the primal root-evolvent.[52] She is the homogeneous and undifferentiated ground of the universe. She is the creative energy (śakti).[53] She is the omnipresent and omnipotent creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. She is immutable, but the world is her mutation. She is devoid of Guṇas, but assumes those and creates the world out of them. She is eternal, assumes the form of time, produces modifications of Prakṛti and also dissolves them in Prakṛti.

Durgā is the foundation of the world.[54] She exists in all creatures as the power of Viṣṇu, consciousness (*cetanā*), power (śakti), hunger, thirst, sleep, nourishment, livelihood, beauty, intellect, forgiveness, memory, reverence, compassion, contentment, fortune and error. She exists in them as her reflections (*chāyā*).[55] She is the supreme goddess[56], the all-pervading conscious power (*vyāpti Devī*), the eternal mother. She is the presiding deity of their sense-organs.[57] This is the element of pantheism. She is good fortune of righteous persons, adversity of vicious persons, conscience of the pure in heart, pious persons' faith in God, and virtuous persons' aversion to wrong actions.[58]

Durgā is the highest knowledge (*paramavidyā*) that leads to release.[59] She is the giver of boons and the embodiment of mercy. She delivers her devotees from distress through her grace and destroys their sins.[60] She gives them worldly prosperity and enjoyment, heavenly happiness and she releases from bondage.[61]

She gives wealth, happiness, *Dharma* and *Mokṣa*. She is the supreme goddess,[62] Śivā, the most auspicious, fulfiller of desires, refuge of all, and the deliverer from distress. She is called Durgā because she is the boat to cross the imperishable ocean of the world with.[63] She is the logos (*śabda brahman*) and origin of the Vedas.[64] She is the highest among the divinities. She is the Divine Mother who always protects her erring children with loving care.[65] In these conceptions can be traced the element of theism with a pantheistic bias.

52. *Saptaśatī*, IV 7; V. 9,
53. *Ibid.*, XI. 11.
54. *DM*. V. 13.
55. *Ibid.*, V. 14-80.
56. Devī Māhātmya of *Mārk. P.* XI. 24.
57. *Ibid.*, V. 77.
58. *Ibid.*, IV. 5.
59. *Saptaśatī*, I. 57.
60. *Ibid.*, X. 56-58.
61. *Ibid.*, IV. 15-17.
62. *Ibid.*, I. 56-58.
63. *Ibid.*, 4. 11.
64. *Ibid.*, 4. 10.
65. *Ibid.*, 4. 17-22; 36-37.

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Besides, these lofty philosophical ideas about Devī, there is also a popular conception about her; she is the daughter of Himālaya and Menakā. In this Purāṇa, though she has different patronymic powers of the gods to combat the asuras.[66] She is credited with the destruction of many asuras such as Mahiṣa, Madhu, and Kaitabha and their brothers Śumbha and Niśumbha. By killing the demon Mahiṣa she came to be called *Mahiṣāsuramardinī*.[67]

Though Devī pervades this whole universe yet she frequently incarnates herself on difficult occasions with a view to help Devas in the execution of their divine work.[68] These incarnations in no way put any limitations on her transcendent aspect since she is eternal. In this respect Śaktism admits the doctrine of incarnation. The *Durgā Saptaśatī* says that the goddess is worshipped by the gods for the welfare of the world. "When remembered in difficulties, you remove tear in all beings; when remembered in safety, you give a mind conducive to doing good. You remove the fear of poverty. Except you, none is there with a heart ever flowing with compassion to do good to all."[69]

The account how the goddess came to be latterly connected with the episode of war between the Devas and the Asuras is quite significant. This war, as it appears from the Vedas and the *Zend Āvestā*, the literary documents of the Indian and the Iranian people was really a struggle that separated the two branches of the Aryan family, the Parsic and the Indic. The asuras originally formed common objects of worship to people belonging to both the branches. But later on the worshippers belonging to these two groups and consequently the powers worshipped by those two people also seem to have quarrelled and got separated from one another. It is the collective power of the Devas that figures as Caṇḍī, Durgā or Kālī, the destroyers of the asuras, in the Purāṇic literature.

The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* identifies Devī with Prakṛti[70] who is ever auspicious; and the sustaining power. She is eternal as well as the supporter of the universe. She is both fearful and benign.[71] She is called Durgā and takes one across in difficulties. She is generally called Viṣṇumāyā, who resides in all beings.[72]

Once residing on the Himālayas, Devī, with an idea of protecting the gods from the demons—parted from her original body[73] and this new form assumed by

66. *Saptaśatī*, 2. 9-19.
67. *Ibid.*, 3.-43.
68. *Ibid.*, IV. 42; I.66.
69. *Ibid.*, IV. 17.
70. *Ibid.*, V. 9; I. 78.
71. *Ibid.*, V. 10; 13; I. 81.
72. *Ibid.*, V. 14; I. 71.
73. *Ibid.*, V. 85-87; *Dbh.* V. 23. 2.

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her was named as Kauśikī. The old goddess Pārvatī became black in colour while the colour of the new goddess was white. Pārvatī was designated as Kālī due to her colour and she made her abode in the Himālayas.[74]

The new goddess Kauśikī was bearing a very charming form. She was illuminating the quarters with her lustre. She was considered as the jewel of womankind in the world.[75] Demon kings Śumbha and Niśumbha were attracted by her charms and desired to marry her. They approached her with a proposal—which was turned down and this resulted in a fateful war. Ultimately the goddess became victorious with the help of several—Mothers as well as Kālikā,[76] Caṇḍikā and with other manifestations of her own.[77] This Kauśikī is again said to be Nārāyaṇī, who incarnated herself in all the other forms.[78]

Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa as its title shows, deals with the various exploits and activities of Devī as the highest deity and the Energy (śakti) of all gods and others.

The Purāṇa opens its account by stating that Śakti is beginningless *Brahmavidyā* and *Sarvachaitanyarūpa*[79], i.e. she happens to be the manifestations of all consciousness. Here Śakti is known as the Highest Primal power, as well as vidyā of the Vedas, who is omnicient, who controls the innermost of all. The *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* mentions the words Śakti in order to denote the goddess called Devī. The writer is very much conscious about the literal meaning of the word Śakti and thus he interprets it as power inherited in the bodies of the different individuals, divine or mortal. Everybody in the world, however great he may be, is under the control of the goddess Śakti and is compelled to work according to her wish. That very power is given different names and epithets in accordance with the various forms, manifestations and activities associated with the power. She is called the great Śakti, higher than the highest and the cause of all causes.[80]

The *Devī Bhāgavata* describes Lakshmī as an incarnate of Sātvikī śakti.[81] The all auspicious Devī Bhagavatī as Mahālakshmī is conceived as having a beautiful face, calm and quite appearance of unrivalled splendour. She is the manifestation of *Sattva Guṇa*, and remains surrounded by her *Vibhūtis*. Her manifestations, Her smiling companions of same age decked with ornaments, wearing divine clothing and holding in each of their four divine hands conch-shell, disc, club lotus[82]

74. *Saptaśatī*, V. 88; *Dbh*. V. 23. 3-4.
75. *Ibid.*, V. 89-92; *Dbh*. V. 23. 5-6 also V. 22, 43-77.
76. *Ibid.*, V. 89-92; *Dbh*. V. 23. 5-6.
77. *Ibid.*, chs. VI-X, *Dbh*. V. 28. 18-32.
78. *Ibid.*, XI. 1-23.
79. *Dbh*. I. 1. 1.
80. *Ibid.*, I. 4. 40-50; 61; IX. 2. 10. 96.
81. *Ibid.*, I. 15. 56.
82. *Ibid.*

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respectively. She is surrounded by her companion Devīs viz. Rati, Bhūti, Mati and Tandrā etc., the personified energies, each possessing a clear and distinct form and endowed with a clear and distinct feeling having in their hands divine weapons, and various ornaments upon their bodies.[83]

The presiding deity of the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is Śrībhūvaneśvarī, who dwells in the Maṇidvīpa. She is Prakṛti as well as Brahman, she is conceived as playing with Puruṣa. She is with or without attributes and of the nature of universal consciousness. It is said in the words of Vyāsa "O Devī, when Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, Varuṇa, Kuvera, Yama and Agni were not thou alone existed then. When there existed no waters, vāyu, Ether, Earth and their guṇas, taste, smell etc., when there were no senses, mind, intellect, pride, when there existed no sun, moon nor anything, you alone existed".[84] "O Mother you hold all these visible *Jīva Lokas* in the Cosmic *Hiraṇyagarbha* and bring out this *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the sum total of the subtle bodies along with guṇas, to a state of equilibrium named *Sāmyavasthā* and remain quite independent and apart for a Kalpa period.[85]

The Purāṇa describes the divine lady sitting on a cot, wearing a red garment and a garland of red flowers and bedecked with red sandal paste. Her eyes are dark-red and that beautiful faced, red-lipped lady looked more beautiful than ten millions of lightings and lustres like the Sun. The Bhagavatī-Bhuvaneśvarī was sitting with a sweet smile on her lips and holding in her four hands, a noose, and a goad and signs indicating as if she was ready to grant boons and asking her devotees discard all fear.[86] Even the birds of that place repeat the mystic incantation *Hrīm* and serve that lady, who is of the colour of the rising Sun, all merciful and in the full bloom of youth. That lotus-faced smiling lady was adorned with all the beauties of Nature. Her high breasts defied the lotus-bud. She was holding various jewelled ornaments e.g. armlets, bracelets, diadems etc.[87]

Her lotus-face looks exceedingly beautiful with jewelled ear-rings of the shape of the *Srī-yantra* Hṛllekhā and other divine girls are shown surrounding Her. They are on the four sides always chanting hymns to Maheśvarī, the lady of the world. She is surrounded on Her all sides by Anangakusuma and other Devīs. She is sitting in the middle of the *Saṭkoṇa-yantra*. She assumed the form of a lady having thousand eyes, thousand hands and thousand feet.[88] Viṣṇu described her as the Devī Bhagavatī, Mahāvidyā, Māyā undecaying and eternal ; the Prakṛti, the cause

83. *Saptaśatī*, I. 15. 60-63.
84. *Ibid.*, II. 7. 59-62.
85. *Ibid.*, II. 7.63.
86. *Ibid.*, III. 3.37-46, 48-49 ; 11. 7. 60-64.
87. *Ibid.*, III. 3. 37-46.
88. *Ibid.*, III. 3.48.

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of all, inconceivable to those who are of dull intellect. She is eternal Brahman and non-eternal Māyā. She is the will-force of the supreme self and creatrix of this world.[89]

She is yogamāyā the eternal, having Pāśa, Aṅkuśa, showing the poses of Varada and Abhaya in her hands ; she is of red colour and has charming personality.[90] Once in the *Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Devī Śrībhuvaneśvarī is found conceived as riding on a swan and having four vedas with her, wearing a garland of white pearls ; all these represent the goddess as Sarasvatī but she is also having three eyes, the symbol of Durgā. This in one of her Saumya forms.[91]

In the Maṇidvīpa, Devī Bhuvaneśvarī is conceived as sitting of the left side of Śiva. She is decorated with various types of ornaments. Her palaces are lovely to look at due to natural scenery, flowers, leaves etc. She is possessed of all the best qualities and charming personality, having four hands and three eyes. She is surrounded and served by the divine damsels, gods, embodiments of powers, and the Pīṭha śaktis.[92]

The goddess Śrībhūvaneśvarī is the Highest essence, the *samvit* of the universal pure consciousness— in whom resides Māyā. The goddess is believed to stimulate Māyā and reside in the hearts of all the Jīvas.[93] Whenever she becomes gracious due to meditation, worship and devotion—she liberates the Jīvas giving them Her realisation and drawing Her own Māyā from them.[94] This whole cosmos (universe) is nothing but Māyā and she is (the goddess) of the nature of consciousness, Existence, Intelligence and Bliss. She is the beautiful one in the three worlds, she is the lord of Māyā and thus is called Śrībhuvaneśvarī, the great lady of the world.[95] No other god can remove Māyā excepting the goddess Bhuvaneśvarī. As darkness can be removed only by the sun; the moon, the lightning or fire and not by darkness itself, similarly Māyā can only be removed by the worship of Devī—the lord of Māyā.[96]

The Devī is the great Mahāmāyā, the highest Prakṛti. It is she that devours everything at the end of a Kalpa. This auspicious Devī is the creator of all the worlds. She is the embodiment of the three qualities, endowed with all the powers. She is Tāmasī i.e. the destroyer of the whole world. She is unconquerable, imperishable and eternal. She is the Sandhyā and the refuge of the Devas. She is the mother of the Vedas, all-knowing and always manifested. This undecaying lady is

89. *Saptaśatī* III. 3.51-53 ; III. 4.27-49.
90. *Ibid.*, IV. 19. 8-9.
91. *Ibid.*, VI. 8. 57-62.
92. *Ibid.*, XII. 12. 17-39.
93. *Ibid*, VI. 31. 46-47.
94. *Ibid.*, VI. 31. 50-51.
95. *Ibid.*, VI. 21. 51-52.
96. *Ibid.*, VI. 31. 53-56.

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void of any Prākṛtic attributes, though she at times possesses attributes. She is success incarnate and bestows success to all ; she is bliss Herself and gives bliss to all. She is Suddhatattva and she bids all the devas to discard all their fears.[97]

It is an auspicious and benign form of Śakti. Devī in the form of Śiva is saguṇa, a manifestation of nirguṇa śakti. She is having a crude form, a charming personality; she rides on a lion, her traditional vehicle, who is the embodiment of crude (beastly) power and is guided by intellect in the form of Devī. She is called Tāriṇī, one who makes the devotees cross the ocean of the world. She seems to be intoxicated by drinks and having red eyes.[98]

In the *Devī Bhāgavata* we find the benign aspect of the goddess, always helping the devotees and the poor, helpless creatures and punishing the wicked fellows. Generally we find in this Purāṇa that Devī herself did not kill any wicked person or demon but she made others powerful enough to destroy the power of the demons.

In the *Devī Bhāgavata*, Devī is said the mother of the world and the lady of all. She is attributeless Bhagavatī Ambikā and is also known as Kātyāyanī, the giver of the desires, who feeds everybody in the world with her milk. This is Śivāṇi, the giver of all happiness without worshipping whom people cannot get happiness in this world.[99] The poet says that when I see persons living luxurious lives and travelling in cars and surrounded by pleasures and enjoying beautiful women—in my opinion they worshipped these in their previous births and are enjoying the fruits of it.[100] The devotees always live in the ocean of bliss, being always free from the pangs of this Saṁsāra.[101]

Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa deserves careful study because it contains extensive information about the social and religious condition prevailing in Bengal at a certain period.

In the *Pūrva-khaṇḍa* chapter XIV, there are many names of holy mountains, rivers and places like Gokarṇa. Gokarṇa is called '*śiva-sthala*' ; Kāmrūpa is mentioned as situated on the bank of the river Brahmanada and Devī's female organ fell at this place. The pīṭha named *Maṅgalakoṣṭhaka*[102] as situated in the city (Puri) of Ujjayinī where Devī dwells as *Maṅgala-Caṇḍī* and grants boons to her worshippers; this is the place where one's paternal blood-relations live.[103]

97. *Saptaśatī*. Vol. 27. 19-22.
98. *Ibid.*, I, 12. 31-39.
99. *Ibid.*, II. 6. 34-35.
100. *Ibid.*, IV. 15. 20-21.
101. *Ibid.*, IV. 15. 19.
102 & 103. *ujjayināṁ tathā puryām piṭhām maṅgalakoṣṭhakam/*
subhā maṅgalacaṇḍyākhyā yatrāham vara-dāyinī//
jñātayo bahavo yatra mataṁ tat tīrtham uttamam/
(verses 14-15a)

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In the *Madhya-Khaṇḍa* chapter XVI of the same Purāṇa, Devī is described as follows :

> She is dark-blue like the new cloud ; wears a tiger-skin which is tied round her waist with a snake ; has three eyes and four hands, and holds a *khaḍga* (sceptre), a *pāśa* (noose), and a skull. As *Maṅgala-Caṇḍikā* she is said to have granted a boon to Kālketu by assuming the form of a '*godhikā*' and to have saved, by sitting on a lotus and devouring and vomitting out elephants, a merchant and his son from the rage of king Śrīśālavāhana.[104]

The manuscript of the *Bṛhadharma Purāṇa*, preserved at Jammu, was copied in the year 1801 of the Vikrama Era, and Ms. no. 4649, which is the oldest of the three Mss. of this work preserved in the Dacca University, must be at least 250 years old. In the *Caṇḍīmaṅgala kāvya* Lālā Jayanārāyaṇa, a Bengali poet of 18th century, gives the Bengali rendering of the verse '*tvaṁ kālaketu-varadā cchala-godhikāsi*' etc. and says that this verse, occurs in Viṣṇu's eulogy of Mahāmāyā in the Uttara-khaṇḍa of the above mentioned purāṇa.

In Charu Chandra Bandhyopadhya's Kavikankaṇa-Caṇḍī (*Caṇḍī-mangala-bodhinī* Part-I, p. 225 the relevant extract of Lālā Jayanārāyaṇa's *Caṇḍikā-mangala-kāvya* is given as follows :—

Bṛhaddharma purāṇer uttar khaṇḍete
Likhā mahāmāyā-prati Viṣṇur stabete
Avatīrṇa hayiyā tumi yasodār garbhe te
Kaṁśa cchali Vindhyavāsī habe nija-garbe
Aerūp staba ācche bistar kathan
Tāte ek śloka aerupete likhan

The city of Ujjayini, mentioned above, is the same as the ancient town of Ujāni which comprised the modern villages of Kogrām, Maṅgalkoṭ and Arāl situated on the bank of the river Ajay in Katwa sub-division in the district of Burdwan in West Bengal. Ujāni, which is one of the 51 piṭhas, is mentioned in *Trikāṇḍasesa*, *Tantracūḍāmaṇi*, *Piṭha-nirṇaya* (alias *Mahāpīṭha-nirṇaya Śiva-carita*, Bnaratcandra's *Annandāmaṇgal* (*pīṭha-mālā*, verse-22). For detailed account see *JASB*, XIV, 1948, pp. 1-108.

104. *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, III. 16. 37-45.
tvam kālaketu-varadā cchala-godhikāsi
yā tvaṁ subhā bhavasi maṇgala-caṇḍikākhyā/
srīsālavāhana-nṛpād vaṇijah susūno
raksāmbuje kari-cayaṁ grasatī vamantī//
For '*raksāmbuje*' (in the second line) the Dacca University Mss. nos. 4199 and 4649 reads '*raksāsrsje*' and the Vaṅga Vaied reads 'rakṣe'mbuje.
The above mentioned verse refers to the stories of Kālaketu and Śrimanta Sadāgar found in the *Caṇḍimaṅgal kāvyas* of Bengal.

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Bhārat bhumete caṇḍī līlā prakāshiā|
Kālketu uddhāribe godhikā hayiyā||
Maṅgal caṇḍikā nām kariyā prakāsh|
Sambarane kari bar kariben grās||
Baṇik sūtake feli ghor śaṅkāṭete|
Uddhār karibe nripa-śālavāhan hate||

Though we find ample material pertaining to Devī worship in the major purāṇas like the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* and lastly the *Devī Bhāgavata* (not accepted by all as a Mahā purāṇa), however it is only in the Upa-purāṇas that we find the complete works dedicated to the cult of Śakti. The Upa-purāṇas are related very often to the central goddess and sometimes to one or other of her principal forms such as, Durgā, Caṇḍī, Kālī, Satī etc.[105] The two Upa-purāṇas viz. the *Devī Purāṇa* and the *Kālikā Purāṇa* are found in printed form and deal with Caṇḍī i.e. śakti worship. Now we may proceed to investigate the individual Upa-purāṇas in order to find out the relevant information about the various aspects of śakti worship as developed in the late madiaeval age.

The *Devī Purāṇa* is held as one of the most important and the oldest Upa-purāṇa dealing mainly with the exploits and worship of Devī, known as Vindhyavāsinī[106]. It gives us important information about the original nature of the goddess,[107] about yoga[108] and the method of its practice, about Śākta iconography,[109] and the Śākta vows and worship.[110]

The *Devī Purāṇa* is a great authority on Śakti worship and has consequently been a work of extensive use. In this Purāṇa Devī appears mainly as a war-goddess.[111] She is Ādyā Śakti and is not different from Śivā Devī.[112] She is named as Cāmuṇḍā in which form she had saved the life of Viṣṇu from the rage of Kālāgni Rudra. Cāmuṇḍā is said to be the powerful Śakti who creates, protects and destroys the universe.[113]

In this Purāṇa, Cāmuṇḍā is told to be the burning flame of the fire of time, and is able to pacify the earthly fire[114]. She is said to be of the black complexion, besmeared with Sindūra, emitting the white rays of lustre. She is the controller

105. Hazra, R.C. *Studies in the Upa-purāṇas*, vol. II, p. 2.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
107. *DVP*. chapter 79.
108. *Ibid.*, ch. 10.
109. *Ibid.*, ch. 30.
110. *Ibid.*, ch. 22.
111. Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Upa-purāṇas*, vol. II, p. 90.
112. *DVP*. 5. 60.
113. *Ibid.*, 5. 60.
114. *Ibid.*, 6. 11.

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of the gods like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. She is the creator and ruler of the gods, demons, human beings and semi-divine beings, as well as birds, animals and inanimate objects[115].

Cāmuṇḍā is said to be living in the cremation grounds[116] and is credited as the destroyer of enemies. She is also said to be the fulfiller of all desires[117]. At the same time she provides with religious merits, worldly enjoyments and final salvation[118]. She is the prime force belonging to Śiva, Viṣṇu and other gods. She is the great goddess, said to be having varied forms[119]. She is eternal, pervading in all the beings and progenitor of all the desires and mental thinking[120].

Nārada eulogizes Devī[121] who, though originating from Rudra creates and protects Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and is known under different names. There are 108 names of the goddesses out of which 45 names identify the goddess with other goddesses and the rest are her appelations which reveal her nature and her heroic deeds.

All the śākta purāṇas agree that the goddess constituted the total united forces of the gods. In order to give credence to this idea these Purāṇas have given rise to a theory that she was formed of the lustre (tejas) of all the gods[122]. The Devī Purāṇa says that when Śiva was worried about the demons, one Tejas appeared before him and changed into a goddess. This very goddess was called Śakti Kālī, or Kātyāyanī[123]. This Teja was actually the strength belonging to Śiva who desired to kill the demons[124]. This account with some variations, is found first of all, in the *Saptaśatī* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*[125].

The chapter of this text describes Devī as the cause of the creation, preservation and destruction of the world[126]. She is *Nāda-vindu-rūpiṇī*[127] having form of Mantras, *Śiva-śakti-svarūpiṇī*[128], *Parā* and *Aparā* and having *Virāṭ* form[129]. She is the

115. *DVP*. 6. 19-34.
116. *Ibid.*, 9. 54.
117. *Ibid.*, 2.21.
118. *Ibid.*, 2. 21a.
119. *Ibid.*, 2.33.
120. *Ibid.*, 6. 32.
121. *Ibid.*, ch. 9.
122. *Saptasatī*, 2.13.
123. *DVP*. 127. 47-60.
124. *Ibid.*, 127. 45-48
125. *Saptisatī*, 2. 9-19.
126. *DVP*. 36.4.
127. *Ibid.*, 36. 5-6.
128. *Ibid.*, 36. 11.
129. *Ibid.*, 36. 13-44.

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destroyer of the enemies' effort in times of war,[130] and is identified with Kātyāyani, Śūliṇi, Durgā, Gaurī[131] and Caṇḍī. She is of benign nature who bestows peace, happiness, and fearlessness to the devotees[132].

In chapter 45 of this text is found mentioned how selection has to be made of proper day and time for the performance of sacrifices to the planets and the deities such as Skanda, Bhānu, Viṣṇu, Umā, Viṇāyaka and others.

The goddess Sarvamaṅgalā, also called Maṅgalarūpiṇi is said to be the destroyer of demon Ruru[133]. She is also identified with that Para Brahma[134] as well as with the different goddesses of Hindu pantheon viz. Bhairavī, Durgā, Kaṇyā, Kapālī Kālī etc.[135]

The *Devī Purāṇa* is the book par excellence of Brāhmanical Śaktism.[136] It mentions Tantras and the Āgamas frequently and also the Bauddhas, who worship the Divine mothers in their own way. It distinguishes between the right hand and left hand worshippers. The latter were to be found in Rāḍha and Varendra (in Bengal), Kāmarūpa and Kāmākhyā in Assam, Bhotta Desa (Tibet) etc. It is noteworthy that this Purāṇa permits the Pukvasas, Chaṇḍālas and other out-caste groups to perform the rituals and sacrifices to the goddess and prefers even a virtuous Śūdra to a worthless member of one of the higher castes as a real devotee and a performer of her worship. This agrees with the statement in the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*, that Durgā was worshipped by such aboriginal peoples as the *Śabaras Barbaras*, and *Pulindas* who were addicted to meat and wine. The worship of a married woman and of virgin girls, as mainfestations of devī, is also prescribed in this Purāṇa.[137]

The *Kālikā Purāṇa* happens to be one of the most important works on Śakti-worship[138] and it is stated in the purāṇa itself that the sage Mārkaṇḍeya,[139] requested by the sage Kamaṭha and others, had recited this purāṇa. This purāṇa mainly deals with the exploits and worship of Kālī who is primarily the *Yoganidrā* and *Māyā* of Viṣṇu[140], but later on she became the wife of Śiva as the dark-complexioned Satī or Kālī for the welfare of the world[141].

130. *DVP*. 36. 17.
131. *Ibid*., 36. 19-25.
132. *Ibid*., 36. 32-34, 18.
133. *Ibid*., 89. 3; 27, 1-2.
134. *Ibid*., 89. 20.
135. *Ibid*., 80. 12-13.
136. Mukherjee, R.K., *The culture and art of India*, p. 168.
137. *DVP*. 22. 19; 35. 17-18; 90. 21; 91, 61 ; 93. 165.
138. Hazra, R.C. *Studies in the Upa-purāṇas*, Vol. II, p. 195.
139. *KP*. I. 1-20.
140. *Ibid*., ch. 5.8.
141. *Ibid*., ch. 9. 24.

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It is for the first time in this purāṇa that we find mention of Dakṣa Prajāpati as celebrating the worship of Devī (viṣṇumāyā) and performing Havana for her so that she may be born in his house as his daughter[142]. She accepted the request on the condition that he would not neglect Her under any circumstance. Here for the first time we find that the hatred towards Rudra and Pārvatī who were in all probability deities worshipped by non-aryan folk was removed and they were accepted in the orthodox brahmanical pantheon.

The goddess called *Yoganidrā* is also known as *Viṣṇu-māyā*, *Mahāmāyā* and *Yogamāyā* and she is also described as the cause of creation, preservation, and destruction.[143] In this purāṇa she is said to have taken the form of Kālikā[144] mounted on a lion, having dark complexion, four hands, a beautiful face and red eyes, having a sword and a blue lotus in the two of her left hands and assuring boon (*varada*) and safety (*abhaya*) in her other two hands.

The Purāṇa presents Devī as parā śakti[145] manifesting herself for the betterment of the world and the protection of the gods from the terror of the demons. She is identified with Brahman and is called the power of each and every being. She illuminates the world with her own lustre and resides in the heart of everybody.[146] She is *vidyā* and *avidyā* both, thus the cause of release and bondage both. She is the creation and creator both.

Mahāmāyā is the presiding goddess of the *Kālikā Purāṇa*.[147] She is the universal mother called Ambikā. She is the *Mūla Mūrti* and all other goddesses are only her different manifestations. She is also known by the names of Mahiṣāsura-mardinī, Durgā, Kāmeśwarī, and Bhadra Kālī. She is a benevolent goddess but is also called Caṇḍikā.[148] The purāṇa describes her as the most beautiful lady in the world, wearing the golden ornaments and having fair complexion, three eyes and four hands, donning a weapon and siddhasūtra in her right hands and varada and abhaya poses in her left hands.[149] She is also mentioned to have 18 hands. She has the lustre like ten million suns, and is very young.

Another form of Mahāmāyā is Tārā or Cāmuṇḍā. Her worship was once very popular in Assam and several images of Cāmuṇḍā also have discovered from that region. The following description of the goddess found in this text shows a slight

142. *KP*. chs. 5.5; 9. 1-26.
143. Hazra, R.C. *Studies in the Upa-purāṇas*, Vol. II, p. 198 ; *KP*. 5.3.
144. *KP*. 8. 9-10.
145. *Ibid.*, 5.8, 6.74, 24. 9-27.
146. *Ibid.*, 5. 15-20.
147. *Ibid.*, 8.50; 55. 1-30; 60.52.
148. *Ibid*, 12.65; 50. 30-34; 61. 6-13.
149. *Ibid.*, 55. 25-35; 62. 16.

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difference from the description of her given in the *Agni Purāṇa*, *Matsya Purāṇa* and the *Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa*.[150]

According to the *Kālikā Purāṇa* the goddess Kauśikī sprang from the body of Kālikā[151]. She is an important deity next to Mahāmāyā. The Devī Mahātmaya of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* however states that the goddess Kauśikī was born from the body of the supreme goddess in a dazzling beautiful form[152]. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* also represents her in a very pleasing manner[153].

The *Kālikā Purāṇa* has mention of a new goddess named Dikkarvāsinī not known from any other source. She was worshipped in the eastern region of Assam. The goddess has two forms such as *Tikshaṇa Kāntā* (dreadfully attractive) and *Lalitā Kāntā* (gracefully attractive)[154]. The former is of black colour, pot-bellied and with one lock of matted hair and that is why she is also called *Ekajaṭā*. Her six attendants are Cāmuṇḍā, Karālā, Subhagā, Bhīṣaṇā, Bhogā and Vikaṭā. Her mode of worship in general, conforms to that of the goddess Kāmākhyā, although her most delectable offerings consist of strong spirituous liquor, human sacrifice, Modaka, flesh, curry, cocoa-nuts and sugarcane.

She is also called Ugra Tārā.[155] In this form her worship was very popular and even today there is a temple at Gauhati known as Ugratārā temple where the Devī is worshipped particularly in autumn with sacrifice of buffalows, goats etc. It is stated that Ugratārā was originally a benevolent goddess, but subsequently due to the curse of the sage Vaśiṣṭha she turned into a malevolent one and came to be worshipped in the left hand way[156].

Lalitā Kāntā is known more by her popular title *Mangala Caṇḍī*[157]. By this name she is worshipped even to-day in Assam and Bengal. She is to be meditated upon as having two arms in *varada* and *abhaya* poses ; her body is yellow, she sits on a red lotus, and is adorned with a bright crown and is attired in red silk. Her auspicious face shows a constant smile and her charming body is endowed with fresh youth. Mangala Caṇḍī is to be meditated upon either on a picture, an image or a pot[158]. Further, she is to be invoked according to the Vaiṣṇavite Tantras and Mantras and with such offerings as are generally offered to the goddess Mahāmāyā.

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150. *KP.*, 63. 93-95.
151. *Ibid.*, 63. 71-74.
152. *Ibid.*, 63. 78-86.
153. *Saptaśatī*, 5.87-91.
154. *KP.*, 83. 13-65.
155. *Ibid.*, 81.20.
156. *Ibid.*, 81.21.
157. *Ibid.*, 83.52.
158. *Ibid.*, 80. 61-64.

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The goddess Umā is described having golden complexion and two arms. In her left hand she holds a blue lotus and in the right a white cāmara. She stands on the right side of Śiva resting her hand on him[159]. She is stated to have eight attendant deities viz. Jayā, Vijayā, Mātaṅgi, Lalitā, Nārāyaṇī, Sāvitrī, Svadhā and Svāhā. The goddess Rudrānī is depicted as having two arms carrying lotus and cāmara in those hands. She sits on a tiger skin placed on a lotus.

There is a large number of deities that were once worshipped under various forms of goddess Tripurā. According to the text under review these are all different manifestations of the Great goddess Mahāmāyā[160]. The goddess Tripurā first manifested herself as a virgin kumārī ; later on she divided herself into three forms of Tripurā aspect and further into Gaurī, Ramā, Bhāratī, Kālī, Caṇḍikā, Durgā, Bhagavatī, Kātyāyanī, Parā, Lalitā and Mahārājñī[161] forms. The three different forms of Tripurā as detailed in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*[162] are Tripurā Bhairavī, Tripurā Bālā and Tripurā Sundarī. The purāṇa devotes several sections to the exposition of rites and ceremonies connected with the worship of the goddess Tripurā in her different manifestations.

A considerable section of this purāṇa has been devoted to the worship of the goddess Tripurā, a virgin goddess of beauty and sex, identified with Pārvatī and Kāmākhyā. The cult of the virgin worship and of the sensual aspects of the Devī worship seems to be derived from the cult of Tripurā recorded in the *Tripurā Rahasya*[163]. It is said in the yoginī Tantra,[164] that a śākta devotee is to be enjoined to contemplate the mental image of a girl of sixteen, shining like the newly rising sun. He has to become identical with Tripurā Sundarī and to think himself as a Devi or a woman[165].

The *Tripurā Rahasya* furnishes certain details about the emergence of this goddess. She is the primordial Energy embodied as Mahādevī (the great goddess). The energy of the whole world is to be contemplated as a woman[166] because the female form is considered both beautiful and pleasure giving, the very embodiment of consciousness and intelligence. So she is contemplated as a pleasing instrument of spiritual success[167]. The female deity manifested herself first as a virgin goddess and then she divided herself in several forms.

159. *KP.*, 63. 43-45.
160. *Ibid.*, 75.74.
161. *Ibid.*, 66-67.
162. *Ibid.*, chs. 66-67.
163. *Ibid.*, chs. 66-67; *Tripurā Rahasya* (Māhātmya Khaṇda), Kasi Sanskrit Series ed. by Pt. M. Sastri.
164. *Yoginī Tantra*, I. 6.17.
165. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other Religious Sects*, p. 146.
166. *Tripurā Rahasya*, 59.3.
167. *Ibid.*

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The goddess was called a virgin because she was her own mistress and by virtue of her own independent status created the universe according to her desire[168]. Here by virgin we do not mean the present meaning of chaste, unspotted girl, but just unwed, unmarried and thus free from any body's control. In West Asia the virgin Ishtār who was frequently addressed as a prostitute and an unwed damsel in her temples were also called the holy virgin.[169] Mention may be made of the *Deva Dāsīs* in Indian temples in this connection.

In the *Kālikā Purāṇa* the goddess Tripurā is adored in three aspects namely Tripurā Bālā, Tripurā Sundarī, and Tripurā Bhairavī[170]. The second aspect i.e. Tripurā Sundarī has three forms, the middle of which is conceived as a fair lady with all good bodily signs, and adorned with varied ornaments. She is of the splendour of the rising sun, full of freshness of the youth ; seated on a couch of lotus flowers, with fully developed breasts, bejewelled with threefold wrinkles of flesh round the belly, slightly intoxicated with drink, pleasing to the eye and causing heavy undulations of passions in the world[171]. In the first and third forms she is depicted as naked[172]. Tripurā Bālā carries an arrow of flowers and a noose[173]. Tripurā Bhairavī is red in colour and dressed in red garments. She is dazzling like a thousand suns with eyes rolling with intoxication of drink[174]. Tripurābālā may be worshipped according to the right hand or left hand rites, but Tripurā Bhairavī must be worshipped according to the left hand method[175]. Bhairavī aspect happens to be the most dominating manifestation of the Devī[176].

This goddess has created nine śaktis called Kāmeśvarī, Bhagamālinī (bearing a garland of sex-organs), Nitya Klinnā (always moist), Bhrūṇatā (pregnant) etc. and also nine yoginis[177]. The goddess herself dwells in the centre of nine triangles placed within one another, the whole being encompassed by one circle. This is called Śrī Cakra and while situated within this circle she is called Mahā-Tripurā Sundarī[178]. She divides herself into nine parts and presides over all the triangles, having different names such as Tripurā, Tripureśvarī, Tripurā-Sundarī, Tripurāvāsinī, Tripurā

168. *KP.*, 19.41.
169. Briffault, *Mothers*, Vol. III, p. 169-70.
170. *KP*, 78.86.
171. *Ibid.*, 67.55.
172. *Ibid.*, 68.89 ; 62.66.
173. *Ibid.*, 78.100.
174. *Ibid.*, 78.93.
175. *Ibid.*, 78.125.
176. *Ibid.*, 78.87.
177. *Ibid.*, 56.7.
178. *Ibid.*, 56.7.

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Śrī, Tripurā Mālinī, Tripurā Siddhā, Tripurāmbikā and Mahā Tripurā Sundarī[179] Whosoever erects a Śrīcakra is entitled to get endless bliss[180].

The Goddess dwells in her own real self in three places[181] ; Kāma Giri (Kāmākhyā Hills) ; Jullundhar and Ourangiri near the sea. There are twelve manifestations of the Devī dwelling in twelve places[182]. These are as follows :

1. Kāmākṣī in Kāñchīpura ;
2. Kumārī (the virgin) in Kerala ;
3. Sundarī (the beautiful) in Vaṅga ;
4. Guhyakesvarī (the lady of the Guhyakas) in Nepal ;
5. Bhrāmarī in Malaya ;
6. Ambā in Anarta country ;
7. Mahālakshmī in Karavila ;
8. Kālikā in Malaya ;
9. Lalitā in Prayāga ;
10. Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhya hills ;
11. Viśālākshī in Vārānasī ;
12. Maṅgalāvatī in Gayā.

So, from our above observations we may say that this Purāṇa is very important from the point of view of the history of Śaktism. It records many stories in order to show the wide prevalence of the śakti-cult. It is for the first time here that the story about the origin or creation of the Śakti Pīṭhas has been related. It is the only work in the whole of the range of the Purāṇic literature that gives detailed description as well as the prescriptions of paśu bali or animal sacrifice to the goddess. It also suggests the performance of Mudrās, especially the *yoni-mudrā* very dear to the goddess. There are long dissertations on the topic of sixteen Upāchāras offered to Devī. In short the Purāṇa represents the ritualistic side of the śakti-cult in a very elaborate form which was very popular in those days.

Antiquity of Caṇḍī

The part that woman is designated by nature to perform, in the propagation of the race is too important to be ignored even by meanest intelligence. The Seers of the Vedas could not but perceive that the woman's part transcended the man's and, as such, deserved grateful recognition not only in material life, but also in the intellectual region of worship. The majesty of this August Mother could not but be realised quite early. She is called Aditi,—Boundlessness personified. Scholars have

179. *KP.*, 57.56.
180. *Ibid.*, 80.15.
181. *Ibid.*, 18. 42-43.
182. *Ibid.*

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expressed surprise at so early a personification of such an abstract idea[183] but the idea does not appear to be more abstract than the conception of the birth of the One when time lay undifferentiated by day and night, by existence and non-existence, the conception of a boundless Void being only its natural premise.

Aditi is the Universal Nature. She is the spouse of Ṛta the cosmic order or Law prevailing in Nature. She is the sky, the air, the mother, the father, the son. She is whatever has been born ; she is whatever that shall be born[184]. She is thus the Universal Nature and Universal Mother. According to Max Muller, Aditi is the earliest name invented to express the Infinite as visible to the naked eye, the endless expanse beyond the earth, the cloud and the sky. (Vedic Hymns. S.B.E. 32/241).

In the *Atharva Veda*, VIII/9/10, this Universal Nature is designated by a new term, Virāj. It is she who first shone out and came into being ; it is she who is the mother of the three worlds (VIII/9/11). She was the Universe in the beginning. She gradually manifested herself in the created things and beings, and in the Laws of Nature. Her identity with old Aditi is also hinted at in *Atharva Veda* VIII/9/21. She is addressed as *Svadhā* (स्वधा) in VIII/10/11,23. She is called illusion in VIII/10/22.

If we compare the conception of Aditi with the Purāṇic conception of Devī, we shall have no hesitation in accepting the two as identical.

Throughout the whole course of development of the theory of Śakti, her Mother aspect is never lost sight of. The next step in the development of this line of thought is reached when the maternal aspect of Śakti led to her inevitable characterisation as wife. Here even the conception did not subordinate her to the husband. Śakti is the female counterpart of Śiva, Prakṛiti is the female energy of Puruṣa, but it is she who is the dynamic principle. Śiva is powerful and active only with Śakti, otherwise he is inert.

This consort aspect of the original mother has been accounted for in the Purāṇas by the story of the birth of the Triad Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva from the Devī, who ultimately took Śiva as her spouse. The stories of the reciprocal birth of Dakṣa Prajāpati from Aditi and of Aditi from Dakṣa[185] and the incest of Prajāpati with her own daughter appear to have been the necessary preliminaries of the above theory. *Śaktivāda* gradually gave rise to Śaivism and it is in that character that it holds the field at present.

In the *Ṛgveda*, many of the Gods appear as provided with wives ; Indra has Indrānī, Varuṇa has Varuṇānī, Agni has Agnāyī, Rudra has Rudrānī etc. But these

183. Prof. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 122.
184. *ṚV.* 1/89/10 & *AV*, VII/6/1.
185. *Ibid.*, X/72/4, 5.

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goddesses have hardly any individuality. The theory that the goddesses are the Śaktis of the gods, i.e. the female energy without whose co-operation the gods are powerless, is undoubtedly a later growth. When this theory became established, the goddess Lakṣmī was assigned as the Śakti of Viṣṇu, Sarasvatī of Brahmā and Pārvatī or Umā of Śiva. The worship of Brahmā fell into disuse and Sarasvatī gradually came to be assigned to Viṣṇu as his second wife. The cult of the wife of Śiva absorbed various forms of primitive worship of the female energy and by degrees emerged as the most distinctive cult of the female principle in the Brāhmanical tradition. The Aryan prototypes of Śakti were originally the consorts of the Vedic gods[186] who were of insignificant nature but later came to be invested with the function of energising their lethargic husbands and, in fact, of using them as the instruments of their creative activity. However, the conception of Aditi, was of considerable significance[187] ; Aditi was the great mother out of whom all creations were manifested. Other conceptions were (i) Māyā, without whose association Brahman is unable to create ; and (ii) Prakṛti which alone brings this varied world into being while Puruṣa behaves as an inactive spectator of the world drama. Possibly the mother-cult had evolved out of people worshipping female spirits of malevolent powers who were propitiated by suitable offerings. People still worship such goddesses as Śītalā, the goddess of small-pox and Manasā, the goddess of snakes, who are worshipped, not so much for gaining any positive benefit but to remain safe from the ruth of the deities concerned. The association of many of the female deities with fire,[188] may also have originated from the fear of the devastating power of fire observed in case of huge forest-fires, which caused veritable holocaust of animals. As the male deity Śiva was believed to be accompanied by a number of *gaṇas*, similarly a troop of female furies came to be associated with Devī. The tradition that she had her home in the Vindhyas and was fond of flesh and wine and that her devotees were hill tribes would point to an acculturation of aboriginal traditions in her cult[189]. The terrible forms of Kālī, Durgā (or Mahiṣamardinī), Caṇḍī and Cāmuṇḍā the goddess was accorded homage by her worshippers as a proper consort of the male god Rudra or Mahākāla having fearful aspect. Her insatiable blood-thirst appears to have been symbolised in the Chinnamastā form of the goddess in which form she is depicted as one who has severed her own head and holds it in one of her hands and three streams of blood spout out from the severed neck, one of which

186. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Vol.I, p. 218.
187. *Ibid.*, p. 215f.
188. *Muṇḍ.* 1.2.4. for the names of the 7 tongues of fire (the first two are Kālī and Karālī).
189. Bhandarkar, R.G , *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious System*, p. 143 ; Bhattasali, N.K., IBBDSM, p. 127.

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falls into her own mouth, while the other two are drunk by her two companions. It is obvious that the cult has been of a composit nature,[190] in which both vedic and non-vedic elements had merged.

On the other hand the benign aspect of the śakti had undoubtedly evolved from a close observance of the tender, loving and protective character of the mother. This led to the speculation of a divine power endowed with the milk of motherly kindness who would take greater pity and consideration on human beings than a stern Heavenly Father. God as Mother could fulfil at least two of the conditions of divinity, viz., creation and preservation, if the human mother is to be taken as an earthly analogue. Only there may be some doubt about her capacity to destroy. The cruel and destructive aspect of Śakti served to show that if occasion should arise, she would not be found wanting even in that capacity either. Possibly there was an element of over-compensation in the process and the terrifying aspects of the goddess were more emphasized than necessary[191]. But the primary interest of those early formulators of worshipable divinities must have been the need of a female god to whom the sinner could unburden his soul more fully than to a male deity and with surer chance of receiving forgiveness. In Vaiṣṇavism Lakṣmī who had been held as a devoted wife is prayed to in order that she might intercede,[192] on behalf of the sinner and secure the grace of her husband. But Devī or Śakti is a far more independent deity[193] from the beginning and she herself absolves the sinner from his guilt out of motherly affection.

The history of the origin of the Caṇḍī-cult is not easy to trace. Whether she was originally a deity held in respect by Mongolian or Dravidian groups of people and was latterly admitted into the Brāhmanical pantheon, or she represents in an altered garb the mythological tradition of Semeremis, the queen of Assyria, or as the Indian Annapūrṇā she is to be identified with *Anna Perenna*, the goddess of the Romans. The discovery made in Crete by Dr. Evans of the image of a goddess standing on a rock with lions on either sides which is referred to a period as remote as 3000 B.C., has offered another interesting analogue in regard to the history of the

190. Muir observes as follows : "As in Śiva, first of all two gods, Agni and Rudra, are combined, so too his wife is to be regarded as a compound of several divine forms, and this becomes quite evident if we look over the mass of her epithets. While one set of these, as Umā, Ambikā, Pārvātī, Haimavati, belong to the wife of Rudra, others as Kālī, Karālī carry us back to the wife of Agni while Gauri and others perhaps refer to Nirṛiti, the goddess of all evil."
O.S.T., IV, chap. III, sec. VIII for Vaiṣṇava association, see Arjuna's hymn to Durgā in the *Mbh—Bhiṣmaparvan*, 796f., and also *Virāṭaparvan*, 178f., and *Harivaṁśa* 3236f. (see Muir, *Ibid.*, p. 368f. and f.n. 337 and p. 361); See Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, p. 224.

191. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 276.

192. Seal, B.N. *Comparative studies in Vaisnavism and Christianity*, p. 112f.

193. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanisads*, Vol. I, p. 218.

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Caṇḍī-cult. The mother in the Hindu mythology rides a lion, and in Mārkaṇḍeya Caṇḍī there is a well known passage where she stands on a rock with a lion beside her at the time of his battle against the demons.

As heretofore mentioned, at a later date an attempt was made on the part of the Brāhmin poets to connect the humble deities worshipped by rural folk with the gods and goddesses of the Purāṇic pantheon. Maṇgala Caṇḍī, a deity eulogised in a popular legends came to be associated with poets of the later age with Caṇḍī, whose form, character and exploits are found described in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*.

Cult of the Mother-goddesses

The cult of Śakti produced a profound influence on general Indian thought. It was wide-spread in the past and has continued to the present day[194]. For the sake of convenience we may agree with Gopinath Kaviraj in dividing the history of Śākta culture tentatively into three periods[195].

(i) Ancient or pre-Buddhist, going back to pre-historic times.

(ii) Mediaeval or post-Buddhist, rather post-Christian upto 12th century.

(iii) Modern, from 13th century onwards.

The history of the concept of the Mother goddess, the supreme creative principle of the universe, is of absorbing interest. Śakti worship in some form may be traced among different ancient peoples from the remote and fading past. She is held as the mother of Nature, most ancient amongst deities ; the *Ādyā śakti*, the Dusk Divinity, many breasted, Crowned with towers, whose veil has never been lifted. Among different ancient people she had been known by different names ; having close affinity to each other in conception. She was Isis, the one who is all that has been, is and will be ; Kālī in India and Hathor in Egypt and also Cybele, the cow-mother goddess ; she was Iḍā ; Tripurāsundarī in India ; the Ionic mother ; Tef the spouse of Shu, by whom she affects the birth of all things ; she was Aphrodite ; Astaste in whose groves the Balim were set ; she was Mylitta ; in Babylonea and Tārā to the Buddhists. She was Ish to the Mexicans, Hellenic people worshipped her as Osea, the consecrated, the free and pure. In Africa she was Selembo, who like Indian Pārvatī, roamed in the mountains. She was Roman Juno and Egyptian Bast, the flaming mistress of life, of thought, of love ; whose festival was celebrated with wanton joy ; the Assyrian Mother Succoth Bewth ; she was known by many other names such as the Northern Freira ; Mūla Prakṛti ; Semele ; Māyā ; Ishtar and

194. *Kalyāṇa Śakti Aṅka*, 1934, p. 637.
195. Radhakrishnan, Dr. S., *History of Philosophy : Eastern and Western*, Vol. I, p. 402.

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Saitic Neith, Mother of the gods ; she has been the eternal and the deepest ground of all things, Kuṇḍalī ; Guhya Mahā Bhairavī and all the rest[196].

The beginnings of the worship of Śakti go back in India as in many other countries of the ancient world, to a very remote past[197]. Traces of the cult of Mother-goddess have been recognised by many scholars among the various interesting objects unearthed in the pre-vedic sites of the Indus Valley. One of the commonest of such objects have been a pottery figurine of a female, practically a nude, with a very short skirt held round the loins by a girdle. It has been said that these pottery images represented a widely venerated goddess, whose name is unknown. Such figures were kept in almost every house in the ancient cities of the Indus, probably in a recess or in a bracket on the wall[198].

Among the findings from Harappā a particular object has been identified as a symbol of yoni. Besides there is representation of a man shown standing with a sword in his hand in a seal and a lady with upheld hands in front of him. Perhaps she was to be offered to the goddess[199] as sacrifice. From this it has been suggested that the cult of Mother-goddess was already prevalent in the Indus Valley[200].

Sir John Marshall has compared the large number of female figurines of terracotta, found both at Moheñjodāro and Harappā, with kindred examples from the neighbouring country of Baluchistan. The figurines are generally portrayed in the form of a standing and almost nude female, wearing a band of girdle about her loins with an elaborate, more or less crecent shaped[201] head-dress, occasionally with ornamented cheeks and a long necklace, and wearing ear-ornaments which take the form of shell-like cups suspended by bands on either side of the head[202].

Large number of terracotta figures, very probably representing this goddess have been found in course of excavations from various protohistoric sites of the Indus valley. The early settlers here appear also to have worshipped the goddess in her aniconic form. Many ring stones, discovered at the sites can justifiably be described as cult-objects symbolising the mother aspect of the goddess[203]. These must be studied along with not only the much-decorated types of ring stones of the Maurya period found in many north Indian sites like Taxila, Kośām, Rājghāt and Pātna, but also phallic objects symbolizing the Father god of the Indus valley people, conveniently described by Marshall as Protoshrines. The ornamented ring

196. Woodroofe, *Śakti and Śākta*, p. 128.
197. Mackay, *EIC*, 2nd edition, p. 54.
198. *Ibid.*
199. Mukherjee, R.K. *Hindu Sabhyatā*, p. 23.
200. *M.I.C.*, vol. I, pp. 57-58 ; Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 66/68.
201. Mackay, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
202. Marshall, *M.I.C.*, vol. I, p. 49.
203. Mackay, *op. cit.*, 2nd ed., p. 54.

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stones of the historic period no doubt represent some variety, but their genera' character shows that they were cult objects comparable with the pre-historic ring stones of the Indus valley on the one hand and the *cakras* and the *yantras* of the later Śāktas on the other [04].

One such ring-stone of a representative nature, unearthed by Marshall at Hathial near Taxila has been described by him in this manner. It is of polished sand-stone, adorned on the upper surface with concentric bands of cross and cable patterns and with four nude female figures alternating with honey-suckle designs engraved in relief round the central hole[205]. These female figures either represent different aspects of the goddess, or are mere repetitions of the same theme. The lady of the ring-stone exactly resembles the gold-leaf female figure dug out of the stūpa at Lauriyā Nandangarh by Bloch and correctly identified by Dr. A.K. Coomaraswamy and others as the Mother goddess[206].

A seal, unearthed at Harappā shows a nude female figure, upside down with legs wide apart, and with a plant issuing from her womb. Her arms are shown in the same position in which those of the proto-Śiva on the Mohenjodaro seal amulet are depicted. Marshall rightly compared this striking representation of the nude female figure with a plant issuing from her womb, with the device on an early Gupta terracotta sealing showing a female figure with her legs in much the same position but with a lotus emerging from her neck instead of from her womb[207]. This idea of vegetation emerging from some part of the body of a female form can at once remind us of the Devī Māhātmya concept of the Śākambharī aspect of the goddess.

While comparing the statuettes identified as representation of the Mother goddess found from the Indus Valley region with similar figures found from Western Asia, Marshall makes an emphatic remark : 'Even, however, without the analogy of these images from Western Asia, there would be a strong presumption in favour of the examples from Moheñjodaro, Harappā and Baluchistan being effigies of the great Mother goddess of the one or other of her local manifestations. For, in no country in the world has the worship of the divine Mother been from time immemorial so deep-rooted and uniquitous as in India. Her shrines are found in every town and hamlet throughout the length and breadth of the land'[208].

The following close resemblance between the cult of the Mother goddess in the Indus Valley and in Sumeria, is sufficient to show the universality of the cult of the female principle which came to be known as Śakti. The Sanskrit epithet '*Lokamātā*'

204. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 188.
205. *ASIAR.*, 1927-28, p. 66.
206. Coomaraswamy, A.K. *HIIA*, p. 10.
207. Marshall, *M.I.C.*, vol. 1, p. 52, pl. xii.
208. Marshall, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 50-57.

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may well be justified because the Mother goddess had been worshipped throughout the ancient world. The following points of similarity may be highlighted :

(i) The lion was the vehicle of the goddess in India as well as in West Asia, while the bull was the vehicle of her consort.
(ii) The goddess was conceived in both places as a war-goddess.
(iii) The manifestation of the goddess both as a virgin, and as a wedded lady.
(iv) In both, regions the goddess is intimately associated with hills and mountains.
(v) And lastly even the term '*Nanā*' which is the name of the goddess in Sumeria[209] is preserved in the Indian name Nānā Devī, enshrined at Hinglāj,[210] now in Pakistan. The word Nanā itself may *inter alia* mean "mother",[211] as does the term Ambā,[212] which also denotes the consort of Śiva. The term Nanā or an expression philologically related to it seems to be alluded to by the name of the Devī in one of her pīṭhas[213]. Related forms can also be traced in different languages[214].

Thus in the opinion of Sir John Marshall, Śakti worship originated in India out of the cult of the Mother goddess, and, it was closely connected with the cult of Śiva. Śakti and Śiva are indissolubly linked[215] in Indian imagination, as the creative principle (power) and the creator, with a colourful family representing the collective organism of life[216].

The pre-vedic archaeological data discussed above throws much light on the early stages of the cult long before it was fully developed into the Śakti worship of the epic and the Purāṇic age. It seems that ancient people living in the primitive matriarchal society had a veneration and love for the mother, which culminated in Mother worship.

Idea of female energy in the Ṛgveda

The concept of Śakti was already there in the minds of Vedic seers (though the term śakti is not yet to be found in the Vedic tradition), is proved by the fact that a number of goddesses are found mentioned therein bearing different associations.

209. Mukherjee, B.N. *Nanā on Lion*, p. 11; *ERE*, vol. VIII, p. 428.
210. *Calcutta Review*, 1913, p. 235-36.
211. *ṚV*, IX/112/3; Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary* (1951), p. 526.
212. Monier-Williams, M. *op. cit.*, p. 83.
213. At the pīṭha of Hiṅgula (or Hiṅgulāṭa) modern Hinglāj situated in the Baluchistan area of West Pakistan, the Devī is locally known as Bibī Nānī.
214. Tarner, R. *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages*, p. 405.
215. Kālidāsa, *Raghu Vaṁśa*, I/1.
216. *Ibid.*

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Each goddess, whether she can be called the same or not, was actually a śakti or personification of female energy. By the Vedic scholars it is generally accepted that Vedic ritualism was dominated by the male deities, and female deities occupy a very subordinate position in Vedic belief and worship, and play, hardly any part as rulers of the world[217]. This idea was based on the fact that only a very few hymns are found addressed independently to female deities in the Ṛgveda. One entire hymn is found addressed each to goddess Rātri and Pṛthivī ; Sarasvatī has three hymns, goddess Āpa has four and last of all Uṣas was held high in popularity with 20 separate hymns addressed to her[218]. But this theory of indifferences of the Vedic seers to the female deities is, however, disproved by the mention of a fair number of female deities in the Ṛgveda[219]. Some of these female deities are of a very interesting character and bring out in a striking manner the inner workings of the minds of the Vedic poets. The conception of Aditi shows that the supreme being conceived as a female could rise to a height which not even the mightiest of the Vedic gods had ever reached.

If an analysis is made of the nature of such goddesses as Aditi, Uṣas, Sarasvatī etc. One cannot fail to recognise the importance ascribed to them by the ancient seers of India. Aditi, the great Divine Mother[220] is concerned prominently with the removal of sins, sometimes alone, sometimes with Mitra and Varuṇa. She gives wealth free from sin and hatred[221]. She releases men from the net of the enemy,[222] and is invoked for protection;[223] she is without enemy[224].

Her association with Varuṇa and Mitra who are Dhṛtavrata[225] and is associated with Ṛta proves the ethical, abstract nature of her conception. This point goes to prove a very early origin of Aditi among Ṛgvedic deities. Her epithets indicate her superiority over other goddesses. Her harmlessness and superiority may have been indicated by her description as an immaculate cow and as one without enemy[226] as well as by the emphasis laid on the absence of hatred or *hiṁśā* in her[227].

It is Aditi who bears the sun by immaculate conception and who brings forth

217. Macdonell, A.A. *Vedic Mythology*, p 124.
218. Macdonell. *Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 81, 92, 93, 102, 103.
219. *Indian Culture*, vol.VIII, p. 66.
220. *ṚV*, VIII/25/7-8.
221. *Ibid.*, I/185/3.
222. *Ibid.*, VIII/67/11.
223. *Ibid.*, X/36/3.
224. *Ibid.*, II/40/6.
225. *Ibid.*, VII/18/4.
226. *Ibid.*, V/46/6; X/100/1.
227. *Ibid.*, VII/66/6.

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all life in the universe[228]. She is the divine virgin who is birthless[229]. She is the night[230]. From her are born gods and gandharvas, human beings, fathers and all the creatures ; hence she is the mother of all[231]. She is also identified with *Pṛthivī*, the earth of the *Dyāvāpṛthivī* tradition. In her concept of the All-Mother, who is not only the mother of man gods and all created things but also the cause of everything, past, present and future, from whom springs all life and to whom such life returns on death was developed.

Next to Aditi, the goddess *Uṣas* (dawn) is celebrated in the *Ṛgveda*. The ushering in of the day and the disappearance of the night brought cheer and joy to the Vedic man and he sang hymns in praise of that glorious dawn, a personification of the goddess of good hope. In the Ṛgvedic hymns she is celebrated, sometimes as a maiden of beauty and promise, sometimes as the daughter of Dyaus or heaven and at other times as being driven in a car, with the men's light pursuing her, even as a lover of a gay maiden. She infuses fresh life into everything including vegetation. In the Vedic hymns Uṣas is called the preserver of men,[232] a goddess of earthly treasure,[233] benefactress of men,[234] preserver of the world,[235] the greatest goddess, producer of food,[236] dispeller of enemies,[237] guide of man,[238] curer of disease,[239] inspirer of five tribes[240] and she is *Āryā Patnī*[241]. Though she is called mother of the gods and the mightiest goddess, yet she does not come near the All-mother concept held by Aditi. These two deities viz. Uṣas and Aditi are spoken of as rivals.

Anthropomorphic conception of any female deity in the *Ṛgveda* reaches its climax in case of Uṣas, the beautiful goddess of dawn. There are three points to be noted in the physical representation of Uṣas, e.g. her youth and beauty, her forwardness and her virginity, and her personal charms ; all these are described again and again in a language of extraordinary charm and beauty. She is white complexioned, perenially youthful, clad in white and of radiant beauty[242].

228. *AV*, 13/2/9.
229. *ṚV*, X/7/2.
230. *Ibid.*, VIII/18/6.
231. *TA*. 10/21/1.
232. *ṚV*, I/12/3.
233. *Ibid.*, I/113/7.
234. *Ibid.*, VII/75/1-2.
235. *Ibid.*, VII/75/4.
236. *Ibid.*, VII/79/3.
237. *Ibid.*, VII/81/6.
238. *Ibid.*, VII/81/1.
239. *Ibid.*, I/12/1.
240. *Ibid.*, III/79/1.
241. *Ibid.*, VII/6/5.
242. *Ibid.*, I/113/2; 7.; V/47/1.

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Uṣas is a warlike goddess and there are many references to her martial spirit. She is invoked to destroy enemies. She drives the enemies away, and destroys those who are filled with hatred against the Vedic seers. She is invoked to vanquish the enemies and divide them[243]. The dawn goddess is compared to warriors. She is rebellious, destructive or revengeful and Anti-Indra[244]. There are references to hostalities between her and Indra[245]. The greatness of Uṣas is testified repeatedly. She is the highest goddess above all,[246] a mighty goddess[247] ; she is the mothçr of the gods and thus Aditi's rival[248].

In another passage Uṣas is stated to have been dark at the outset but become fair afterwards. She emerged radiant and white complexioned in the later development in the Durgā-Māhātmya of *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* where Kauśikī is said to be emerging out of Kālikā's body[249]. It is said that Uṣas has her seat on the hills and again, that she comes from uplands[250]. This idea would definitely indicate her affiliation with the north and some affirmity with the later mountain goddess Pārvatī.

In conclusion it may be stated that Uṣas was a mountain-born maiden-goddess, glowing with youth and beauty, bold and reductive, delighting in material deeds and ambitious. Though there is a touch of cruelty in her nature yet she is more prominently stated as gracious, kind and benefactress of men, mother, mistress and preserver of the universe. All these lead towards the conclusion that the concept of Śakti and Durgā, residing in the mountains, and a powerful, virgin, war-goddess, if not originated, was already developing in the Vedas.

In the *Ṛgveda*, Sarasvatī has two aspects; she is a holy[251] river and also a goddess. She is purifier as a river and invoked with seven Sindhus called mothers[252]. Residence on her banks is desired by the Ārya people,[253] and sacrifices used to be performed on her banks. As a goddess she presides over truthful speech[254] and knowledge. She has considerable ritual importance and is generally groupèd together with Ilā, Mahī, Bhāratī and the wives of the Gods[255]. She is the benefactress of men

243. *ṚV*, I/48/8; VII/81/6; IV/52/4; I/48/13.
244. *Ibid.*, I/113; VII/77/4.
245. *Ibid.*, VII/18/16.
246. *Ibid.*, VIII/96/1 ; IV/19/8 ; IV/23/7; IV, 30/8, 9, 11.
247. *Ibid.*, VII/79/3.
248. *Ibid.*, VII/81/4 ; I/113/19.
249. *DS*, V/86-88.
250. *ṚV*, VI/65/5 ; VII/76/2.
251. *Ibid.*, VIII/54/4.
252. *Ibid.*, X/64/9.
253. *Ibid.*, III/23/5.
254. *Ibid.*, I/3/10-12.
255. *Ibid.*, V/5/8 ; IX/5/8; X/110/8.

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and is called Sunṛta Devī. She is charitable, beneficient,[256] beautiful, well-formed and a white-complexioned goddess[257]. She is the best among rivers, among goddesses and mothers[258]. Her might is so great that even gods worthy of worship approach her on knees[259]. In the 6th Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda* there is a new development of her concept. She appears suddenly as a mighty goddess of war who is feared even by the gods and her help is invoked in battles. From a white complexioned, beautifully formed goodess, she becomes a terrible-looking goddess causing death to enemies[260]. She appears also as the guardian or tutelary deity of the Vedic people for whom she shows her affection in various ways.

There are three distinguishable types of mother-goddesses in the *Ṛgveda*, viz.,[261]

(i) The type representing beneficient, forgiving, kind and gentle mother goddess as represented by Aditi[262].

(ii) The type of virgin mother-goddess of martial spirit and beauty represented by Uṣas.

(iii) The type of mother-goddess who is regarded as a tutelary or special guardian deity of a people represented by Sarasvatī. There is evidence that all these were the different manifestations of the same great divine entity conceived by the old sages as the eternal female principle.

The mother-goddess conception may be said to have reached its culmination when the abstract idea of the cosmic principle as the source of all creation is conceived of as female. The so-called *Devī-sūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* identifies *Vāk* with the almighty goddess. If Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, is connected with the deity of this hymn, then she is found described with special emphasis, to be a war-like goddess and what is more important in the light of later history, she is brought into connection with Rudra[263]. She appears more emphatically as a champion of people. "I fight for men", says Sarasvatī who has the dual aspect of a destroyer and a gracious giver of boons[264].

Whatever has been said in the *Devī-Māhātmya* in praise of the goddess *Vāk* applies to the Devatā of this Sūkta of the *Ṛgveda*. In the *Devī Māhātmya* the deity is called *Deva jananī*, and the supreme mother principle without which nothing can be

256. *ṚV*, I/40/3.
257. *Ibid.*, VII/96/3-4.
258. *Ibid.*, IX/81/4 ; VII/95/6.
259. *Ibid.*, II/41/16.
260. *Ibid.*, VII/95/4.
261. *Ibid.*, VI/61/1.
262. *Indian Culture*, vol. VIII, No. 2, p. 168.
263. *ṚV*, X/125/6.
264. *Indian Culture*, Jan.—March, 1942, p. 166.

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created either on the level of mind or of Matter, either amongst the immortal gods or amongst mortal men[265]. She is called the Queen, the gatherer of treasures, most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship[266]. In this hymn she is said to be of the nature of movement,[267] and as the first creation of the words, the means of communication between gods and men[268]. The hymn has an inspirational tone similar to that found in the *Devī-māhātmya*. In both is found an adoration of the Supreme principle of energy which treats all the worlds with its mysteries that are being unfolded in time and space and also beyond. Such a power is in itself an eternal mystery.

In *Khīla-sūkta*[269] śakti is called the mother, the resort of all human beings. She blazes forth with tapas and is worshipped by the devotees for obtaining the fruits of their actions[270]. Sāyanācārya, the great commentator of his Vedas in the commentary on *Ṛgveda*, has pointed out that Durgā is no other than the great śakti[271].

According to a popular tradition there is another hymn called Śri-sūkta which forms an appendix as Khīla-sūkta of the *Ṛgveda*[272]. The hymn contains 15 verses and praises the goddess Śrī, the goddess of wealth. In the first verse the Goddess is invoked as having the colour of red lotus, seated on a red lotus and wearing a garland of red lotuses and she is called the deity of lotuses[273]. She is approached through the sacrificial fire to bestow on her devotees gold and domestic animals like cows and horses, to vouchsafe health, wealth, a good harvest, beauty, name and fame[274].

Though it is well-known fact that there is no mention in the *Ṛgveda* of such names as Ambā, Umā, Durgā and Kālī which became singly or collectively the names of the central figure of the śākta-cult, the facts discussed above show that the developed Śakti worship of latter days was indebted to the female principle concept of the early Vedic age. The three deities viz. Vāc-sarasvatī, Rātri and Śrī of the hymns Vāk-sūkta, Rātṛi-sūkta and Śrī-sūkta give us a vivid picture of the three manifestations of Śakti as Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahā Sarasvatī [75].

Concept of Mother Goddess in the Later Vedic Literature

Among other texts of vedic affiliation, generally taken to be later in point of

265. *DM*, ed. V S. Agarwala, p. 223.
266. *ṚV*, X/125/3.
267. *Ibid.*, X/125/1.
268. *Ibid.*, X/1/25.
269. *Ibid.*, Khīla Sūkta, X/127.
270. *Ibid.*
271. Sāyanācārya, *Ṛgveda Bhāṣya* (Khīla Rātṛi Sūkta).
272. Śri-sūkta (appended to the 5th book of the *ṚV*).
273. *Ibid.*, verses I/3,4, 12-15.
274. *Ibid.*, V/8-10.
275. See three episodes in *DS*.

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time, the mention of the Goddess Ambikā is found in the *Vājasneyī Saṁhitā*,[276] where Ambikā is addressed as the sister of the God Rudra and is invoked to come and partake of her share in the sacrifice alongwith Rudra. In the sacrifice called *Tryambaka Homa*, there is a mention of the offering of oblations on Palāśa leaves at the crossroads. Later on, this offering was especially meant for the mother-goddess[277]. The text met with in the *Vājasneyī Saṁhitā* in this connection runs as follows :[278] "This is thy portion, Rudra, graciously accept it together with thy sister Ambikā". In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[279] Ambikā is mentioned as in the above passage interpreted as the name of the sister of Rudra and the share of sacrifice belongs to him along with a female.

Ambikā is also mentioned in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*[280]. She is mentioned as autumn in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa[281] and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[282]. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* Rudra is called Ambikāpati[283]. From this it transpires that Ambikā has been an autumn goddess related to Rudra. According to Keith the name is derived from *Tryambaka*, a name given to Rudra in the *Ṛgveda*[284]. Arbman explains the name as having three mothers and tries to connect Rudra with the cult of the mother-goddess in mediaeval India[285]. This view though refuted by Keith seems to have some solid basis in regard to the history of śakti-cult in India.

Umā appears in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and in the same text Rudra is invoked as Umāpati[286]. She is Umā Haimavatī in the *Kena Upaniṣad*[287]. In the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* we find the Upaniṣadik conception of Śakti fully developed. In that theistic Upaniṣad the absolute Brahman of the Upaniṣad becomes the 'personal God', associated with his śakti who is not an altogether separate principle but belongs to him as his own[288].

Now turning to the *Śrauta* and *Gṛhya Sūtras* we find the mention of Bhadra Kālī in the *Sāṅkhyāyaṇa Śrauta sūtra* as well as in the *Gṛhya sūtra*. In the *Boudhāyana Gṛhya sūtra* and Manusaṁhitā Durgā and Jyeṣṭhā are mentioned and offerings are

276. *Vājasneyī Saṁhitā*, III/53.
277. *Mṛchchakaṭikam*, I/15.
278. VS, III/53.
279. *SB*, 2/6/3/4.
280. *TS*, I/8/6/4.
281. *TB*, I/6/10.
282. *SB*, II/6/2/9.
283. *TA*, X/18.
284. *ṚV*, VII/59/12 ; A.B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*, vol. III, p. 144.
285. Arbman, Rudra, p. 296 quoted by Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
286. *TA*, X/18.
287. *Kena Upaniṣada*, III/25.
288. *Śvetāsvataropaniṣad*, I/3.

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prescribed for them[289]. In the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* there occur names, some of which are familiar names of independent goddesses and others as different names of Devī[290].

All these names, Kālī, Karālī, Manojavā, Sulohitā and Viśvarūpā etc. are the names of seven flames mentioned as tongues of agni in the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*. The names Durgī, Vairochanī, Kātyāyanī and Kaṇyā Kumārī occur in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[291]. The name Durgī explained by Sāyana to be the same as Durgā, the meaning of this name being given in the Saptaśatī. Thus the concept of Śakti or Durgā had been developing gradually in the later Vedic literature.

Mother-goddess in the Rāmāyaṇa

In the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, there is no mention of independent cult of mother goddess, though she is often mentioned with great respect. She is called Devī, and is respected by all[292]. Even the gods were not able to undo whatever has been done by the goddess and this would be clear from the story of Devī's curse upon Kubera[293] and to the Gods.

In the Rāmāyaṇa she is always considered as the wife of Śiva. Her names like Umā and Girijā were very popular. Both these epithets were old epithets. Umā as Umā Haimavatī, the daughter of Himālaya is found mentioned in the Kena Upaniṣad. Once she is called Rudrānī[294] but her title Pārvatī was greatly in vogue[295]. She is always depicted as the consort of Śiva[296]; in her benign form she is held as benevolent and graceful to her devotees[297]. The worship of Śiva and Śakti appears to have been known to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but the same does not appear to have grown as an independent sect[298].

Besides this important position attached to Umā, the consort of Śiva, there are other references in the *Rāmāyaṇa* which indicate that the worship of mother goddess was quite well known to the tradition though not mentioned in clear terms.

(a) In the fifth book of the *Rāmāyaṇa* there is mention of a goddess named Surasā who is told to be the Mother of the Nāgas[299]. She is depicted as living

289. *San. Gr. S.*, II/14/1 (a) ; *Manusaṁhitā*, III/89 *San. Sr. S.* IV/20 ; *Boudh. Dh. S.* II/5/6 ; *Boud. Gr.* S. I/2/7/1 ; III/3/2/9.
290. *Muṇḍ*, I/2/4.
291. *TA*, X/1/7.
292. *Rmn*, I/36/6 ; I/10/26 ; VII/13/22-35, 87, 93.
293. *Ibid.*, I/30/21-25.
294. *Ibid.*, VII/13/23.
295. *Ibid.*, VII/4/27 ; VII/13/23 ; VII/6/26-30.
296. *Ibid.*, 1/41/1-3.
297. *Ibid.*, VII/89/22-23.
298. Dr. Yaduvansi, *Śaiva Mātā*, p. 59.
299. *Rmn*, V/11/145-68.

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on the top of the Maināka mountain, and also in the midst of the ocean.[300] She is called Kāmarūpinī.

(b) Another goddess has been named Siṁhikā who was seen by Hanumāna, in the water of the oceans. We are told that she used to kill and devour everyone who chanced to fly over her.[301]

(c) It is indeed surprising to find that Laṇkā, the capital city of Rāvaṇa's kingdom was protected by a demon goddess.[302] In the later literature this demon goddess is specifically mentioned as a form of goddess śakti[303].

(d) Sītā, the wife of Rāma has been described as Kāla Rātri, as epithets used for the goddess, showing the terrible aspect of Śakti[304]. Her destructive force has been put forward in the term 'Sarva laṅkā Vināśinīm'. The idea that Sītā took the form of Kālī for the destruction of Rāvaṇa is found in the two later *Rāmāyaṇas* viz. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*[305] and *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇā*[306].

(e) Tradition has it that king Rāma Chandra of Ayodhyā was the first to celebrate the autumnal worship of the goddess. No clue to this tradition can be traced in any recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* attributed to Vālmīki. But the commentator of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Rāmānuja Svāmin)[307] has quoted from the Kālikā Purāṇa to uphold the tradition.

All these references are sufficient enough to prove that the *Rāmāyaṇa* had wide knowledge about śakti-cult in its popular form.

Mother goddess in the Mahābhārata and Harivaṁśa Purāṇa

The cult of the female principle known by various names attained a great importance in the traditions maintained in the *Mahābhārata*. There are two complete hymns addressed to her as Durgā.[308] The *Mahābhārata* says that she is Durgā as she rescues people from difficulties[309]. She is worshipped by the gods for the protection of three worlds. Many new names and aspects of the goddess can be traced in the *Mahābhārata*. It is also stated in the *Virāṭa Parvan*[310] that the Mother goddess takes

300. *Rmn*, V/58/21-33.
301. *Ibid.*, V/58/35-45 ; V/1/185-88.
302. *Ibid.*, V/3/21-30 ; V/58/48-49.
303. *Mahābhāg*. P. 37/8.
304. *Rmn*. V/51/34-35.
305. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, I/4/18 ; I/1/34 ; II/1/10-18 ; VI/3/35 ; VI/4/40.
306. *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*, see Śakti Aṅka, Kalyāṇa, 1934, p. 386.
307. *Rmn*. VI/110, last verse (*KP*, 60/26-36).
308. *Mbh*, IV/6 and VI/23.
309. *Ibid.*, IV/6/20.
310. *Ibid.*, IV/6/17 ; VI 23.

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delight in spirituous liquor, flesh and sacrificial victims. Of the two hymns addressed to the Mother-goddess mentioned earlier one occurs in the *Bhīṣma Parvan*. This happens to be a prayer by Arjuna to Durgā. Arjuna invokes the *Siddha-Sennānī* (leader of the *Siddhas*) the noble, the dweller on Mandāra, the Kumārī, Kālī, Kapālī, Kṛṣṇa-piṅgala, Bhadra-kālī, Caṇḍī, Mahākālī, Caṇḍā, Tārīnī, Vara-varṇinī, Kātyāyanī, Karālī, Vijayā, Jayā who bears a peacock's tail for the banner, adorned with various jewels, armed with many spears, wielding sword and shield, younger sister of the chief of cowherds (Kṛṣṇa), eldest, born in the family of cowherds, Nanda, delighting always in Mahiṣa's blood, Kauśikī wearing yellow garments, loud-laughing, wolf-mouthed, deliverer in battle, Umā, Śākambharī, Śvetā (white one), Kṛṣṇā (black one), destroyer of Kaiṭabha, Hiraṇyākshī, Virupākshī, Dhumrākshī, (golden, distorted, dark-mouthed), Veda-śruti (tradition of the Veda).

The other hymn occurs in the *Virāṭa Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, where Yudhiṣṭhira one of the five Pāṇḍavas invoked the goddess of power who would remove dangers which would occur to her devotees. She is represented in this parvan as the sister of Hari[311] born of Yaśodā and Nanda Gopa. The main points in this hymn may be summarised as follows :—

Here Durgā is said to be the same as Kṛṣṇa, as well as, the feminine side of Kṛṣna,[312] she is said to have four hands and four faces[313]. Among the other weapons she holds the noose, bow and discus. She is praised as Kumāri or the maiden[314]. She is addressed as the slayer of Mahiṣa, the buffalo-demon, as Kālī, Mahākālī and Vindhyavāsinī[315].

It is interesting to note how the exploits of one deity are often attributed to another. This upholds the idea that there is really one devī and her different manifestations were assumed for certain definite purposes. She assumes various forms for fulfilling various purposes [316]. In some of her manifestations she assumes a malignant form while in others benevolent form.[317]

In these two hymns and in the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*, Durgā is definitely linked with Kṛṣṇa[318]. At the same time, she is more clearly identified with the wife of Śiva, and is addressed as Umā. These passages usually dated in the 2nd or 3rd century A.D.,[319] go to show that a cult of the goddess had been already well-established.

311. *Mbh*, IV/6/2.
312. Dikshitar, *Lalitā-Cult*, p. 27.
313. *Mbh*, IV/6/8.
314. *Ibid*,, IV/6/14,
315. *Ibid.*, IV/15-17.
316. *Lalitā Cult*, p. 27.
317. *DM*, I/64-66.
318. Avalon, A. *Hymns to the goddess*, pp. 70-71.
319. Payne, *The Śākta*, p. 39.

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The *Harivaṁśa* which is a continuation of the epic probably existing from the 4th century A.D., also contains references which go to show the popularity of the goddess. She was identified with all the chief deities, and had stolen their chief characteristic epithets[320] and thus the inherent strength (śakti) of the male deities.

The aforesaid hymns illustrate in a characteristic manner the various constituent elements of the developed Śākta cult. The composite goddess was no doubt made up of such aspects of the female entity as mother, daughter and sister. The concept came to embody various Vedic elements as well as a wide variety of non-Vedic strands. She was probably held in worship by such Vedic clans as the Kuśikas and the Kātyas as would be evident from her appellations as Āryā, Kauśikī and Kātyāyanī. The various non-Vedic strands in her character may be traced in the well known *Āryā-stava*,[321] where she is mentioned to have been worshipped by the Śavaras the Barbaras and Pulindas. She is often described in other contexts as Aparṇā[322] (not even covered with a leaf garment, i.e. nude), *Nāgna Śavarī* (the nude Śavara woman) and Parṇa Śavarī. On the other hand she is also mentioned to have commanded respect and adoration from the higher classes including the nobles and kings.[323]

In the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* we are told how Viṣṇu with the idea of destroying Kaṁśa went to Pātāla[324] and sought the aid of the goddess, *Nidrā-rūpinī*. He asked her to take birth as a daughter of Yaśodā to share his glory there. It is also described that the Devī would kill two demons, viz. Śumbha and Niśumbha[325] and she would be worshipped with animal sacrifice[326].

Vaiśampāyana repeats a hymn to Āryā (Durgā)[327]. It begins with reverence to Kātyāyanī and to goddess Tribhuvaneśvarī, thus indicating the first firm step towards acculturation of the un-Aryan war-goddess Durgā[328]. Besides repeating the names and epithets mentioned in Arjuna's hymn to Durgā, she is called the elder sister of Yama, and is said to have been worshipped by un-Aryan tribes. She is described as being fond of wine and flesh[329] and is called Surā Devī (goddess of wine). She is mentioned as Sarasvatī by Vālmīki and Smṛti by Vyāsa. She is the science of Brahman,

320. Avalon, A. *Hymns to the Goddess*, p. 82 *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*, chs. 59 & 166, Muir English Tr. vol. IV, p. 433.
321. *H. Vam*, III/3/7.
322. *Ibid.*, III/18/17.
323. In the *Mbh.* she is worshipped by Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Pradyumna and Aśvathāmā.
324. *H. vam*, II/2.
325. *Ibid.*, Viṣṇu Parva, 120/20.
326. *Ibid.*, 22/ 53-54.
327. *Ibid.*, 3/1-28.
328. *Ibid.*, 108/457.
329. *Ibid.*, 3/129.

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the Veda and is pervading the whole world[330]. Muir has rightly pointed out that the subject of this passage is but to take Durgā and her worship under the patronage of Viṣṇu[331].

Again the hymns addressed to Durgā[332] by Pradyumna, the son of Kṛṣṇa and by Aniruddha,[333] the grandson of Kṛṣṇa, are examples of the efforts being made for the Aryanisation of the cult. The goddess is here described as being adored by seers of gods with flowers of eloquence[334]. She is called the sister of Indra, Viṣṇu and Gautama[335].

The above discussions about the knowledge of the cult of Mother-goddess in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* provide an interesting picture regarding the evolution of the cult through different stages. Considering the association of Durgā with mountains, hill-tribes, and the *Loka-mātās*, world mothers, we may agree that the cult of Durgā came down from a hoary age and might have started among primitive tribes in remote days. On the evidence of Vedic references to the goddess and different practices connected with her worship, we have to conclude that it had absorbed substantial elements of Vedic traditions as well. We have thus a continuous story of the prevalence of Śakti-cult in the Vedic and the post-Vedic times.

Caṇḍī, the destroyer of demons and saviour of gods

The above background may be used to take up the study of Caṇḍī aspect of the goddess which happens to be the principle element of investigation in this volume. In the *Mahābhārata* (*Bhīṣmaparvan*, chap. 23), there is a hymn addressed to Durgā by Arjuna under the advice of Kṛṣṇa as referred to above. In this hymn Durgā is invoked by Arjuna in order to gain victory in the forthcoming battle. This shows that Durgā had already acquired a very great stature as a bestower of victory. Among the names by which she is addressed here occur the following : Kumārī (maiden), Kālī (black or female time as destroyer), Kapālī (wearer of skulls), Mahākālī (the great destroyer), Caṇḍī (angry), Kātyāyanī, (of the Kātya family), Umā, Kāntāravāsinī (dwelling in the forest).

There is another hymn in the *Virāṭaparvan* (chap. VI) attributed to Yudhiṣṭhira. It does not exist in the principal southern recension and is probably an interpolation,

330. *H. Vam*, 3/25.
331. Muir, *op. cit.*, IV, page 434 , *H. Vam*, 1/3.
332. *H. Vam*, Viṣṇu parvan, 108/5-14.
333. *Ibid.*, 120/4-47.
334. *Ibid.*, 120/5.
335. *Ibid.*, 12/6-7.

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as it contains almost the same matter as in a similar passage in the *Harivaṁśa*. The points and epithets in this hymn which deserve notice are as follows :—

She is called Mahiṣāsuranāśīnī or the destroyer of the demon in the shape of a buffalo ; she is fond of wine, flesh and beasts. She was born to Yaśodā and dashed against a stone, whereupon she went to heaven. She is called the most beloved of Nārāyaṇa and the sister of Vāsudeva. She resides permanently on the Vindhya mountain.

It has been stated here that she would kill Śumbha and Niśumbha and would be worshipped with animal sacrifices. There is also a hymn to Apyā (Durgā) in which she is represented as the goddess of the *Śabaras*, *Pulindas*, *Barbaras* and other wild tribes, and as fond of wine and flesh. The goddess that killed the buffalo-demon, was, according to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa (chapter 82) made up of the fierce radiance of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmadeva, and all the other gods contributed to the formation of her limbs as well as her ornaments. Herein She is stated as Caṇḍī as well as Ambikā. Here there is a detailed account about how the goddess had killed the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha. The gods, according to this account, being oppressed by the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha went to the Himālayas and praised the goddess, whereupon Pārvatī came out to bathe in the Gaṅgā. Śiva also hailed her as Ambikā, who came out of the body of Pārvatī, and said that it was she whom the gods were praising to induce her to kill Śumbha and Niśumbha. She was called Kauśikī, because she sprang out from Koṣa or frame of Pārvatī's body. When Ambikā came out of her body, Pārvatī's complexion became dark, and hence she received the name of Kālikā. In course of the fight, when Śumbha and Niśumbha had pounced upon her, her forehead became dark with anger, and from out of the forehead emerged Kālī with a frightful face wearing a garland of skulls and a tiger-skin and with an infernal weapon (*Khaṭvāṅga*) in her hand. She killed the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, and went back to Ambikā who thereupon, since she had killed those demons, acquired the name Cāmuṇḍā. The seven Śaktis i.e. Brāhmī, Māheśvarī, Kāumārī, Vaiṣṇavī Vārāhī, Narasiṁhī and Aindrī which are the powers or spirits of the gods from whom their names are derived, are called her excellent forms (vibhūtis). At the end, the goddess announces that she would, in the age of Vaivasvta Manu, destroy Śumbha and Niśumbha again by assuming the form of the goddess residing on the Vindhya mountain. She also proceeds to mention about other forms that she would assume on other occasions such as the daughter of Nanda, Śākambharī, Bhīmā, Bhrāmarī etc.

We have seen earlier how the cult of the Universal Mother gradually transformed itself into the cult of Śakti identified with the energy of Śiva. In the beginning, when the Supreme god Viṣṇu lay in Eternal Sleep on his Eternal Bed over limitless waters. Brahmā sat in meditation over a lotus that had sprung up from Viṣṇu's navel. The forces of destruction in the shape of Madhu and Kaiṭabha emerged

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from the ear-wax of Viṣṇu and started their attempt to destroy Brahmā, the principle of Creation. It was then that Brahmā invoked the Universal Mother who enveloped Viṣṇu as Mystic Sleep, to leave Viṣṇu and allow him to rise in order to destroy the forces of evil.

The next may be taken up the episode of the *Devīmāhātmya* in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* about the killing of the buffalo demon by the Devī. Here she is the product of the combined energy of all the gods and is thus a true all embracing Śakti goddess in character. The lion appears for the first time in this episode as her vehicle.

The third episode definitely connects Śakti with the cult of Śiva. Two demons, Śumbha and Niśumbha became powerful and oppressed the gods, who, in their distress, invoked the aid of the Devī who had once before saved them from the oppression of the buffalo demon. When the gods were praying in this way, Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva, was passing by. She enquired of the gods, whom they were praying to. Then suddenly from the cells of Pārvatī's body sprang Śivā (the female counterpart of Śiva) and answered, "These gods are praying to me". Having emerged from the cells (koṣa) of Pārvatī's body, the goddess became known as Kauśikī.

Thus whenever the Gods were threatened by the asuras Devī manifested herself again and again by assuming different forms and names in order to deliver the gods from peril. Most of these forms are fierce and warlike in character. However the Devī is worshipped also under a number of placid forms and in the form called both these aspects are found combined.

Caṇḍī of the Maṅgal Kāvya of Bengal

It appears that in early medieval period, the concept of Caṇḍī (which can be traced to early purāṇas) was very well-known in different parts of the sub-continent. Bengal was no exception. However, in this part of India particularly in the indigenous literature of medieval Bengal, we can notice certain features of the cult of this deity not easily noticeable in other parts of the sub-continent. These features perhaps allude to the existence of a cult of indigenous folk goddess in parts of Bengal which was merged with that of Caṇḍī due to some conceptual similarity between them. The identity was achieved perhaps at the time of composition of relevant literature in Bengal.

In Bengal, poetry appears to have been employed in its earlier stages for religious purposes. Poems in honour of Caṇḍī and other popular deities testify to the same inspiring motive in their writers. The songs were sung in honour of such popular deities on the occasions of their worship. Such music was enjoined as a part of the religious function itself. Men and women assembled in number at places of worship, inspired by faith, and the poets who wrote the poems gradually felt the need to make their compositions really interesting and attractive. The earliest

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specimens of songs composed in honour of the tutelary deities of the people are generally short. They gave stories in brief, illustrating the might and grace of particular deities. For this purpose, a short and simple tale without any pretensions to scholarship was first composed. Next some other poet usually sought to improve upon the earlier work. As particular religious sects gradually gained ground and counted increasing numbers of votaries, their religious poems also grew in detail, till the brief outlines composed by earlier writers grew into elaborate ballads in the hands of the later poets.

In Bengal where the people themselves, lived by and large in straw-built houses, large amounts of money came to be spent in order to build temples. Such temples were decorated with the finest touches of decorative art. The idea of luxury could have no hold upon a people who lived a very simple life themselves but applied their aesthetic taste and money to satisfy their religious urge. Such display of lavishness did not bring about any sense of social inequality, as the ownership of a Maṭha or temple, however massive and costly such structures might be were held as equally accessible to all.

The songs to which we have referred above, constituted a wide mass of popular literature of Bengal and probably existed in some crude shape even before the Paurāṇic Renaissance. Though laterally taken up by the Brāhmaṇic school, their subjects had been conceived and worked out by the people in an earlier epoch of history when Brahmanic power had not yet gained complete ascendancy. The Brāhmins probably had recast these compositions by introducing Sanskrit words and occasionally many fine passages from classical Purāṇic texts into them. But the subject-matters of these poems prove that those were originally quite unconnected with classical Brahmanical tradition. The chief characters in the poems do not belong to the highest castes and the Brahmins had hardly any part in the drama of the poems. Dhanapati, Śrīmanta, Lahanā, Khullanā — the principal characters in one part of the ballad glorifying the goddess Caṇḍī had been persons belonging to the merchant-class, which did not hold a very high position in Hindu society. In other part of the ballad, the chief character happens to be the hunter Kālketu who came from one of the lowest castes ; indeed he was a member of the tribal group held outside orthodox brahmanical folds. In the manner in which the deities are represented to help their votaries, there is evidently a coarse and rustic element which indicates that the poems originated with the ordinary unsophisticated group of people, rather than with the more refined classes.

The present work of *Caṇḍīmaṅgala* is chiefly concerned with the goddess Caṇḍī, one of the most widely popular forms of the universally acclaimed śakti, in which form she has been extremely popular in Bengal, from a fairly early age. It has already been pointed out that Caṇḍī, as a form of śakti finds mention in the Mahābhārata. In Bengal her popularity can be traced from quite a few images of Caṇḍī existing

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from as early as the 9th century A.D. as will be shown at a later stage in this study. But reference here, in connection with the growing literary exercises, is particularly made to the well known *Caṇḍī Maṅgala Kāvya*, a ballad of great popularity. As we see her first, Caṇḍī is held as a goddess of forest life, and her especial proteges are a hunter and his wife, who earn their living by hunting and selling the meat to the people of near-by settlements. She also shows concern for the well-being of the wild animals of the forest. Kālketu, a hunter and butcher, and his wife Phullarā, who sell meat in a village market, are wild, unsophisticated and hard-working people. If anything, they are far removed from civilization. Yet they were the people whom Caṇḍī, appearing in the guise of a beautiful high-born maiden, chooses to for the propagation of her cult. They are utterly bewildered and dismayed to find her sitting among the bones and squalid remains that surround their non-descript dwelling hut and implores her to return to her own people but she pays no attention to their behest. When Kālketu in despair makes a show of force to compel her to return, she strikes him motionless. She then reveals her identity. Having convinced the hero that she is the goddess Caṇḍī, she leads him and his wife to a place in the forest, where Kālketu with his hunter's knife, for he has no agricultural implements[336], digs up, under her instructions seven jars filled with gold and jewels. Caṇḍī thereupon instructs him to clear the forest, establish a town and a settlement and build her a temple, and conduct her worship there on Tuesdays[337]. Kālketu the butcher, is to be the founder and the first priest of the temple and the followers of the newly found creed of the worship of Caṇḍī.

The second part of the story, that of Dhanapati the merchant, his two wives, Lahanā and Khullanā, and his son Śrīmanta, has no connection with the Kālketu episode. Kālketu came into conflict with a tyrannical king who ruled over a tract of land called Kaliṅga, which seems to have included parts of Orissa and the province of Andhra, a geographical identification which may be taken as proof that the earliest worshippers of Caṇḍī lived in south-west Bengal, in the area then known as Rāḍha. Some writers of the Caṇḍīkāvya, including Mukundarām, who at the time of writing lived in some other part of Bengal inform us in their autobiographical notes that their families had emanated from the south-west i.e. Rāḍha. Association with the neighbouring region of Orissa has been confirmed by Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharya,[338] who claims that a goddess or patron of hunting, who resembles Caṇḍī as she is depicted in the popular *Maṅgalkāvyas*, is still worshipped in a number of villages in Orissa[339].

336. *KC*, ed. D.C Sen, vol. I, pp. 214-15.
337. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 863-4.
338. Bhattacharya, A. *BMKI*, p. 299.
339. Roy, S.C., *Oraon Religion and Customs*, pp. 60-7 ; *The Oraons of Chota Nagpur*, pp. 220-1., 224-28, 235, 239-41.

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The early tradition of the Caṇḍī cult as disclosed by the Kāvya may be broadly summarised as follows: She was first worshipped in the south-western part of Bengal, which we may take to have included parts of Orissa, by people who probably were of tribal and nomadic disposition and were living in that area. It is probable that they had not yet come fully under Brahmanical influence. The priests among them were apparently chosen from among the people themselves. Caste was no factor in such selection. It would appear that Caṇḍī was not in the beginning a malignant deity. To achieve her ends, she could use cunning bribery and some force, but not murder. The terrifying aspects of the deity appear rather in the second part of the ballad, that of Dhanapatī. There is a marked contrast between the manner of the release of Kālketu from prison in Kaliṅga and the rescue of Śrīmanta from execution at the hands of the king of Ceylon both of which had been enacted by the grace of the goddess. Kālketu was saved by a dream which Caṇḍī sent to the king,[340] whereas the execution of Śrīmanta[341] is stayed by a battle, reminding one of the anecdote of Caṇḍikā in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, which story has served as the model.

Caṇḍī becomes a folk deity

The idea of God as a feminine being, may have been characteristic of primitive Asiatic races, such as the Mongolians and the Dravidians in particular, whose civilisation, according to some scholars, preceded that of the Aryans. In the Vedas which present the creed of the Indo-Aryans before those had assimilated any cultural trend of the primitive races of India, we do not find any pronounced worship of God as mother. But the whole country was full of such worship and the Aryan settlers had to recognise and adopt such traditions before long. It appears from the Tāntric texts that some form of the Śakti cult had been imported into the tāntric traditions of India from China.

But the Aryan settlers in India could not probably escape the influences exerted by the pre-Aryan inhabitants of the country for long and had started absorbing many beliefs and traditions of those un-aryan neighbours and incorporating those in their own tradition. Thus when the cult of the mother Goddess came to be recognised by the Indo-Aryans, they raised it into a highly refined state, Sanskritised its vocabulary and Aryanized its modes of worship.

But these developments must have taken many long years to reach a state of acculturation. Such names like Dhelai Caṇḍī, Lakhai Caṇḍī, Vāsulī, Thākurānī—are quite clearly non-Sanskritic in origin and indicate that those were adopted from different localities inhabited by people who were not Brahmanical in this culture. The worship of a snake goddess and also a female deity worshipped as mother which

340. *KC*, vol. I, pp. 331-2.
341. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 863-4.

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were the prototypes of goddess Manasā and of Caṇḍī respectively once prevailed in many parts of the ancient world. Archaeological discoveries made in Crete by Dr. Evans proved that the worship of a serpent deity was in vogue there as early as 3000 B.C.

But though the worship of female deities were recognised early, the local divinities in all parts of India could not receive similar recognition and homage from the Aryan settlers without a struggle, especially as the worship of these deities had many such elements which were crude and unfit for absorption by the Hindus into their organised cults. Śaivism, which was the earlier of the two cults which were adopted from non-vedic traditions had given considerable opposition to various forms of Mother worship. Bengali literature begins, so to speak, with accounts of struggle between the Śaivas on the one hand and the worshippers of local deities who claimed to be recognised as forms of Śakti, but whom the worshippers of Śiva regarded as quite unworthy of worship. At a later date, however, the Śhiva creed was blended with the Śakti cult, even in its crude local forms; but this could happen only after a hard and prolonged struggle between the two.

It will be our endeavour in this chapter to trace the history of this struggle and the gradual elaboration of these local cults as can be found from literary sources.

It is found mentioned in the *Chaitanya Bhāgavata*, a work written in 1536, that many people at that time took pride in worshipping Manasā Devī, the snake goddess. The songs composed in honour of this deity may be traced back, as stated above, to a very early period and they have a wide circulation all over Bengal, specially in the East were the earliest writer of this song, Hari Datta lived. The great respect commanded by this deity in the lower Gangetic valley is not difficult to explain. The plains of Bengal, specially the portions adjoining the sea, are infested with snakes and death from snake bite during the rainy season had been extremely common and caused considerable alarm to the people. Wide areas in these parts of Bengal get submerged under monsoon water and when the floods come, the mud hovels and thatched roofs of the poor villagers became shelters of venomous snakes causing death to large numbers of unwary people. In their utter helplessness the people could think of no other respite but to take recourse to propitiating the deity presiding upon the deadly power of the snakes.

Thus was conceived the goddess Manasā, who represents the divine power behind the snakes and she had become a popular deity from very early times among the inhabitants of the snake infested regions of the country. The aryan groups of people who came from the highland of the north do not appear to have been much concerned with the dangerous aspect of the power of the snake at the outset. Gradually among the early settlers had grown awareness about the serpent power leading to the growth of legends about the *Nāgas* traceable from the myth of *Ahī* in the *Ṛgveda* and the episode or Kadru and Vinatā, the mothers of the snakes and the

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birds found in the Mahābhārata. Further, mention may be made of the concept of the primaeval serpent Vāsuki and the numerous semi-divine nāgas mentioned in the Brāhmanical tradition.

Some scholars have traced the cult of Manasā as having some relationship with the people of Dravidian stock but it was in Bengal that Manasā came to acquire a very wide popularity. The worship of Manasā ultimately came to be recognised as a form of śakti worship but this position of Manasā had not been recognised in the society with ease since, it appears, the worshippers of Śiva were not ready to recognise the eminence of Manasā. A bitter struggle seems to have ensued between the sponsors of the cult of Manasā and the followers of the god Śiva as can be discerned from the *Maṅgala Kāvyas* composed in honour of the goddess Manasā and her ultimate recognition as a form of Śakti among large masses of people in Bengal.

The history of this struggle between the followers of the Śaiva creed with the sponsors of the cult of Manasā is a long drawn one. Some flowers such as Aśoka and Javā offered to Śakti are not acceptable to great Śiva. The heroic firmness with which Chānd Sadāgar, Dhanapati Sadāgar and other followers of Śiva adhered to their fate and offered resistance to the spread of the worship of female deities of local and popular tradition, opens a vista through which one can get a glimpse of this struggle, ultimately leading to an acceptable compromise.

There is much that is crude in the poems eulogising the goddess Manasā and Caṇḍī. This, however, proves that they once formed a part of the popular literature of the country before the people had come in contact with the refined Brāhmanical trait contained in the Purāṇas. Readers of these poems cannot fail to notice the manoeuvres and subterfuses taken recourse to by the deities that would often appear undignified and unworthy on the part of a divinity. The propaganda undertaken by the followers of the Śākti-cult, however, was to establish the pre-eminence of a personalised female divinity in place of the impersonal god Śiva. All through, in these poems one is sure to find how the mothers' heart in the divinities, are always eager to extend their protective hands to those children who cling to them. Into whatever danger a believer might fall, if he cries for motherly help of the divinity whom he worships in a patient prayerful spirit, she is sure to appear before him and give the protection sought for. Instances of this personal element in the deities are to be found throughout the extensive literature of the Śāktas. The character of Śrīmanta and Kālketu in the Caṇḍī Maṅgal Kāvya and Sundara in the Vidyā Sundara or Lau Sen in Dharma Maṅgal, as recast by the Brahmanical priests, and of Behulā in the Manasā Maṅgal, had all been designed in order to emphasise the great success attained in life by the devoted adherents of respective goddess by sheer devotion. When all efforts on the parts of the people in distress failed and the great characters were reduced to states of utter dejection, even when some of them were doomed to die on the scaffold, they are found to fix their whole

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heart on the mother and solicit her divine help with tearful eyes, imploring her to save them by her divine power. The mother is thus improved always found to come to the relief of her devotees by extending her hand of protection and solace.

The inertness of Śiva in the old Bengali poems is very well marked. Caṇḍī in this literature is an extremely active deity; so is Manasā and all those other divinities in whose honour these Kāvyas were composed in old Bengali. These divinities would not stand to see a tear in the eyes of their worshippers. Whenever they fall into danger they are sure to obtain succour. A Caṇḍī, a Manasā, even a Śītalā or a Satyanārāyaṇa is always formulating plans as to how a devotee could be rescued from danger and how the earthly properties and wealth of the believers could be increased.

But Śiva the Great God, is characteristically inert and immobile. In the poem of Caṇḍī Dhanapati Sadāgar is exposed to all imaginable dangers ; he is thrown into a gloomy dungeon, where a stone, heavy enough to crush the strongest man, is found to have been placed upon his body. At the moment when his sufferings had become unbearable Caṇḍī appears to him and calls upon him to have faith in her, promising him great rewards. Dhanapati however replies "Even though in this dungeon my life goes out, I will not worship any other deity than Śiva."[342] In *Manasār Bhāsān* we find Chand Sadāgar put through the most harrowing trials because by no means he would worship Manasā. He remains firm in his devotion to Śiva. "I will not defile the hand with which I worship Śiva by offering worship to Manasā Devī, that Goddess who is blind of one eye."[343] He said this in great contempt when he was offered prosperity and happiness provided he agreed to worship Manasā. King Chandra Ketu in *Śītalāmaṅgal*, in spite of his great troubles, would not worship Śītalā and remained true to Śiva. But what do the followers of Śiva gain as reward for their heroic devotion to his cause ! The great Śiva happens to the passive and inert does not care for the sufferings of his followers. So it is no wonder that the followers of other deities who lavished favour upon the believers and undertook to destroy their enemies and confer wealth and prosperity upon those without being asked, increased daily in number, till the poems in honour of Śiva, though forming a part of the earliest literature of Bengal, were gradually overshadowed by larger and more poetic compositions in honour of Manasā, Caṇḍī and Satyanārāyaṇa. The popular religious ceremonies of women folk, particularly of the unmarried girls, have also given rise to excellent pieces of folk literature. The ceremonies of which quite a number are known as the *Vratas* (vows). The performance of these Vratas are accompanied by the recitation of rhymed or unrhymed verses (generally known as

342. *Yadi bandīsāle more bāhirāya prānī ।*
Mahesh ṭhākur bine annya nāhi jāni // Kavikaṅkan.

343. *Ye hastete puji āmi deb śūlapāṇi ।*
Se haste nāpujiba cheṅga muḍi kāni. // Ketaka Das.

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Vrata-kathās) which contain fine touches of rural poetry. Associated with performances of such ceremonies there is always to be found some element of art, either in the form of poetry or the art of painting. Though in a state of wane such *Vratas* are still found in vogue among women folk of different parts of Bengal, adding aesthetic pleasure to the conscious religious sentiment of the performers of the *Vratas*.

Popularity of Caṇḍī and distribution of Caṇḍī cult

The foregoing examination of the early material found in the *maṅgala kāvyas* and the *Vrata* poems seems to warrant a conclusion that the cult of Śiva was still widely practised at the beginning of the 12th century and that those of Manasā and Caṇḍī had also developed beyond their original context and had been gaining popularity by new converts from the followers of the Śaivite creed. These new creeds associated with the female deities like Caṇḍī etc. had travelled along the great rivers and were diffused over the central, northern and eastern areas of the province where the centres of Sena authority were located. The contact between those primitive beliefs and Brāhmanical Hinduism could hardly have occurred later than the 12th century, because there must have been a fairly considerable lapse of time after the first contact between these two traditions and for the primary and secondary material pertaining to the growth of these new cults to be fused into integrated structures. As such the fusion between the two had undoubtedly occurred before the advent of the great poets in the 15th and 16th centuries who had composed the current *maṅgala kāvyas* in their full glory. The disruption caused by the Muslim invasions and the resultant fall of the Sena power precluded any possibility of shortening this interval.

The extant *Śivāyaṇa* poems consist almost entirely of episodes drawn from purāṇic sources. Of Rāmeśvar's composition, which is in form an agglomeration of very loosely connected parts, without any central theme, portray Śiva as a popular deity represented as a common cultivator of land. The rest consists of hymns in praise of the Purāṇic Śiva and various other deities and the common-place stories regarding their doings in heaven. The motive of Śiva's visit to earth was not a desire to help the human farmers, but because of the continued nagging of his wife, the goddess Gaurī, who was angered to see him sitting idly on Kailāśa, or at the most begging, while she and the children were without food. It is an extreme example of almost complete obscuration of the primary by secondary material. Part of the cause, perhaps the major part, was the fact that the Śiva mythology had not developed the heroic, robust and dynamic character of Śiva to have human qualities due to the weight of the purāṇic overlay. Another cause was undoubtedly the ease with which the farmers' god was identified with Mahādeva, who immediately usurped pride of place and obscured the personality of the other Śiva, with the result that the visit

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to earth by Śiva became merely one of many exploits, all of which originated in heaven.

Cāndo, Sanakā and Behulā of the *Manasāmaṅgalkāvya*, Kālketu, Phullarā and some of the minor characters of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya* had, early in the history of the legends, achieved popularity and literary stature in their own right and resisted such cavalier treatment as the people are found to suffer in the Śiva stories. The subsequent re-shaping of these stories had not obscured the human qualities of these personalities depicted in the poems. It may not be lost sight of the fact that those people were essentially Bengalis. The poets, notably Ketakādās and Mukundarām, had been able to glorify the greatness of the characters and develop those into heroes bearing dramatic power and appeal. Nevertheless these stories were incorporated with stories of Sanskritic origin, and the whole were set in purāṇic frames, which, it cannot be denied, were in some versions fully worthy of their purpose. The heroes were given ancestry in heaven and their actions were explained as derived from heavenly situations, though the genius of some of the poets was occasionally able to reverse the process and import human situations into heaven. The marriage of Manasā to Jaratkaru was celebrated, as Dr. Sukumar Sen points out, according to the accepted Bengali rites.

The first three cantos of Vipradāsa's *Manasā-Vijaya* are set entirely in heaven or hell, and describe the birth of Manasā from the seed of Śiva, her growth in *pātāla*, her frequent quarrels with Caṇḍī; who in this poem is Śiva's wife, her saving of Śiva when he fell senseless after drinking the poison coming from the sea, and the distribution of the poison among snakes, scorpions, and poisonous insects : an unquestionable example of what V.A. Smith calls 'the processes by means of which tribal gods are converted into respectable Brāhmanical deities'[344]. There are a few other episodes in these poems, which, having no recognizable connexion with the main theme of the story, must be regarded as digressions which had grown to be parts of the corpus of legends for reasons other than those of literary structure and coherence.

As was the case with primary material, the evolution of Caṇḍī mythology follows a course so similar to that of Manasā that a detailed analysis would involve much needless repetition. A brief mention of the main features will show how their two traditions were of closely similar nature. The unoriginal Dhanapati episode may be ignored ; it is to that of Kālketu that we must look for reliable witness of the growth of an indigenous story through the stages of augmentation from Sanskritic sources to an ordered structure, in which both elements are fairly balanced. Caṇḍī has become the queen of heaven, the wife of the Great God, though she still retains much of her early qualities to be differentiated from the Caṇḍikā of the 12th century.

344. Smith, V.A. *Oxford History of India*, 2nd. ed., p. 180.

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Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. Kālketu and Phullarā are only to the superficial view to be taken as 'low caste' people ; they were divine beings, born on earth to be agents in the propagation of the Caṇḍī cult ; and like Lakhāi and Behulā, in the *Manasā-vijaya* they are withdrawn from their earthly sojourn as soon as that task had been accomplished. The pattern of accretion and absorption is the same in both of the poems. The narrative of Mukundarām shows how in the hand of a genius the two strata can be blended into an artistic unity, each complementing the other and contributing what it had to give. The material belonging to the two parts of the kāvya could conceivably have been worked into a coherent design, but the canvas would have been rather small. It is also hard to see how the purāṇic material by itself could ever have become truly alive and could infuse the poem with that wealth of human experience and emotion which make it to this day so beloved of even illiterate Bengali audiences.

The Śākta cults of Bengal represent a particularly distinctive feature of the religious life of Bengal and the extent of literature which flourished under the direct influence of those cults is also fairly large. We do not know of any such Śākta influence in the religion and literature of any other part of India excepting Malabar. The Śākta literature of Bengal generally belongs to the type of Maṅgala literature, which is the literature of religious propaganda. Among the Śākta cults, the more important are the cults of Caṇḍī (or Kālī or Kālikā), the consort of Lord Śiva, and the cult of Manasā, the serpent goddess. We have also Maṅgal Kāvyas depicting the cult of goddess Śītalā (the goddess of the dreadful small pox) Kamalā or Lakṣmī (the goddess of wealth), Ṣaṣṭhī (the goddess believed to be in charge of the welfare of children) and others, but the literature belonging to such cults is comparatively negligible both in quality and in quantity.

The *maṅgala kāvya* literature of Bengal is a continuation in vernacular of the religious literature in Sanskrit generally known as the Purāṇa literature. The Sanskrit purāṇas are sometimes infused with a spirit of propaganda on behalf of some half-indigenous and half-traditional religious cults. There is in these Purāṇas the spirit of glorifying some of the gods and goddesses with the help of huge network of stories which bear testimony to the irresistible divine power of such deities and thus make them acceptable to the Brāhmanical people. The same spirit is found in the *Maṅgala-kāvyas* of Bengal, which launched vigorous and continuous propaganda on behalf of some god or goddess in question with reference to various episodes where he or she had the supreme power to save the devotee from all sorts of dangers and difficulties and to bring destruction to all who opposed his or her supremacy. These gods and goddesses of the *Maṅgala kāvyas*, in spite of their Purāṇic affiliation, are often indigenous in nature. Naturally, therefore, when the worship of these gods and goddesses began to be introduced in the society at large their divinity was questioned and the move for the introduction of their worship was strongly resisted

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by different sections of people upholding cults coming down from earlier days. The followers of these new gods and goddesses had, therefore to justify, in keen competition with their rivals, the divinity of the deity in question and the legitimacy of his or her claim to worship on earth; and this will explain the origin of our *Maṅgala Kāvya* literature. But it is to be observed that once these literary compositions could gain sufficient currency and popularity, before long, the stories turned out to follow, more or less, a literary convention. It cannot be said with any degree of certainty whether Mukundarām, the greatest among the poets of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgala* versions, was a devotee of Caṇḍī or that Bhārat Chandra, practically the last and the most secular of the poets of the Maṅgala literature, was a sincere devotee of the Goddess worshipped in the form of Annadā. Religious garb was rather a device in mediaeval literature to make literature acceptable to the masses, who were prompted to listen to these literary works more with a religious fervour than with a literary taste.

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CHAPTER TWO

Story of Caṇḍī Maṅgal

THERE ARE two stories which form the subject-matter of all poems in honour of *Maṅgala Caṇḍī.*

THE STORY OF KĀLKETU

Nīlāmbara, son of Indra, was born upon this world under a curse, as Kālketu, the hunter. He married Phullarā, daughter of Sañjayketu, who used to sell in the market the vension and other flesh that he brought by hunting, and thus the pair earned their livelihood. The wild beasts of the forest, with the lion at their head, applied to Caṇḍī for protection, as Kālketu seemed bent on annihilating them. The lion himself was somewhat crest-fallen as he could not give effective aid to those who owed allegiance to him as their Lord. Caṇḍī was moved to compassion and granted the boon that Kālketu should no longer be able to molest or destroy them.

It was morning and the dairy maids were carrying their curds in pitchers to the market for sale. On the right the cows were grazing in the pastures and the village looked lovely under the morning sun. Kālketu, the hunter, with his quiver on his back and a great bow in his hand, and crystal ear drops in his ears went forth on his usual hunting excursion. As he was about to enter the dense forest, he saw a lizard of a golden colour. This lizard, he thought, was not a good omen. He tied up the animal with the string of his bow and thought it would serve for a meal if no other aninal should be forthcoming that day.

By the will of Caṇḍī, a dense fog covered the forest that morning, and though Kālaketu wandered all round, in quest of a quarry, he could find none. Growing hungry as the day advanced, with his fruitless search, he returned home and acquainted his wife Phullarā with the tale of his disappointment. He suggested that she

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should go to their neighbour Bimalā and ask for the loan of a few seers of khud or broken rice and some salt, and pointed out the lizard which lay bound with the string of his bow ; this might also be killed and cooked, as no better could be found, to appease their hunger for the day.

Phullarā went to her friend Bimalā for the loan and in the meantime Kālaketu found in the cottage a small quantity of flesh left unsold the day before. He carried this to Golaghat to try if any purchaser could be found for it. The lizard, who was no other than Caṇḍī herself, now came out from the noose in which she was tied and assumed the form of a beautiful woman. Her complexion was of the colour of Atasī flower and her dark hair fell down her back in luxuriant curls. She looked like a damsel of sixteen. Her silk sārī, her golden bracelets, her necklace sparkling with precious diamonds, her bodice embroidered with gems inset by Viśvakarmā himself, the god of art, the majesty of her demeanour—all indicated her noble rank, seemingly that of a queen. When poor Phullarā came back to her hut, she could not trust her own eyes. Bewildered, she made a low obeisance to the lady, asking her who she was and why she had condescended to grace their lowly dwelling place with her august presence.

Caṇḍī gave her story in language which had a double meaning. She said that her husband was old and poor, and showered his favour on her co-wife, whom he had placed upon his head, while she was treated with great indifference. This referred to Śiva her husband, the co-wife being the Gang, who is represented as borne on the head of the Great God. But Phullarā understood the statement in its ordinary sense and did not at all suspect her guest to be the goddess Caṇḍī. Poor Phullarā living in great poverty, prided herself on the love of her husband and was contented. She did not now wish the beautiful damsel to be seen by Kālaketu ; so hiding her jealousy as best she could, with smiles, she advised her to return to her own home. "For", said she, "the night is approaching and it is not safe for one of your position to spend the night in a stranger's house". "You call your husband a stranger to me ?" said Caṇḍī, "but he is devoted to me ! and indeed it was true that Kālaketu, the hunter was a worshipper of Caṅḍī. At these words of the goddess, Phullarā's voice became choked with tears ; but without manifesting any external sign of her emotion she quoted from the Śāstras to show the grave indiscretion of staying in a strange house without permission. "Think of Sītā", she said, "how faultless she was, yet she was put to shame, because she had lived in Rāvaṇa's house for a time ; Renukā, the wife of Bhṛgu was beheaded because her husband suspected her. If your co-wife quarrels with you, you can surely give tit for tat. Why should you leave your husband's roof for that ?"

"I understand my own affairs", said Caṇḍī, "it is not for you to instruct me in my duty". At this, a feeling of great unrest overtook Phullarā, and she tried by a description of her abject poverty to work upon her guest's mind, that she might give

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up the idea of staying with them. She said, "only look, lady, at my poor hut, the roof made of palm leaves, supported on a single post made of ricinus tree ! It breaks every year in the summer-storms. In the month of Vaiśākha, the fierce sun glares over head and its rays are like living fire. There is no shade to be found under the trees ; my feet burn on the hot sand, as I go to market to sell the meat. My torn rags are so scanty that I can scarcely draw them up to cover my head. If I leave my basket in the market, for a moment, the kites fall upon it, and empty it immediately. Through the days of Jyaiṣṭha we have scarcely any food, and live for the most part on wild berries. In the months of Āṣāraḥ and Śrāvaṇa, when the newly formed clouds cover the sky, the village roads become muddy and pools full of water, a host of leeches bite me as I go out, though a snake bite would be more welcome, for it would end my miseries. In the month of Bhādra, our whole village is flooded and scarcely can I find a customer for my meat. At the approach of Āśvin every one, seems to be happy and the goddess Umā is worshipped in big houses. There is dance and merry-making and people are dressed in beautiful raiment. But goats are sacrificed to the goddess at every house. So our meat will not sell in the market, and in this hut we have so often to fast. In the winter months the little fire that we kindle with stray fuel gathered from the woods scarcely warms us. For want of clothes, I often wear the skin of a deer, which but ill-protects me from cold. Then comes the spring season, when the jasmine blooms and the bee whispers love to it gatherin its honey. With the spring's soft influence in their hearts, maidens and youths are lovesick. But poor Phullarā feels only the pain of hunger. Why do you, Oh noble lady, court a life so wretched as must be that of a hunter's wife ?" Her eyes glistened with tears as she related the story of her woes.

Nor did she at all exaggerate her miseries ; only Kālaketu's love made such amends for the ills of life that she did not mind them. When the hunter's well-formed strong arm served as a pillow to her in the night, what did she care for want of a nice bed ? When eating what she had cooked, Kālaketu praised her for her good cooking, what did she care that no food was left for her ! Did she not feel gratified that her husband was happy though she might have to fast all the day herself ? And who was this woman that came now to rob her of her husband's love, the only thing she praised in life ? Alas, exposure and hardship had sullied her youthful beauty ; could she ever be a match for this paragon of beauty ! She had no qualifications to commend herself to her husband, except her love for him. What will she do now ? Her heart broke at these thoughts. But Caṇḍī was not at all moved by the accounts of poverty. "Very well Phullarā", she said, "from this day there will be no more poverty in this house. You see my jewels ? With them I can buy a kingdom. Come, do not grieve, you will have a share of my wealth and I shall not be blamed for coming here for Kālaketu himself brought me, drawing me hither by his noble qualities."

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This was what Phullarā understood her to say. But indeed her words bore another sense and in that sense were true ; for she said Kālaketu himself had brought her there bound with the string of his bow. The word Guna in Bengali means both a bow-string and noble qualities.

Grief was going to rend Phullarā's heart at these last words of Caṇḍī. She could no longer suppress her feelings. Great tears fell from her eyes, and she turned and went weeping all the way to meet Kālaketu at Golaghat. There, as the hunter was negotiating the sale, Phullarā approached him with tearful eyes. He was struck with wonder—never having seen her moved in such a manner and asked what was it that caused her so much pain. "You have no co-wife", he said and no sister-in-law nor mother in-law to quarrel with you in the house. "Why then, O my darling, do you weep", Phullarā replied "I have none my lord, to quarrel with. It is true that you are my all. But it is you who have caused me this pain. What fault did you find in me that you have become a villain like Rāvaṇa ! Whose wife have you brought to our house ? The king of Kaliṅga is a cruel tyrant. He will kill you and rob me of my honour by force, if he gets the slightest inkling of your act".

Kālaketu stood wonder-struck for a moment and then said "This is no time for joking. I am dying of hunger. If what you charge me with is false, I shall cut off your nose with a knife." Kālaketu's words were rough but straight forward, as befitted an illiterate huntsman of his class. It is difficult for the foreign reader to understand the abhorrence with which huntsman is regarded in Bengal life. He is something of a poacher, something of a trapper and altogether a savage. Throughout this poem, the poet seeks to deprive Kālaketu of any refinement as will appear from this coarse threat to his wife. Phullarā, of course, was far from being sorry at his abuse ; for his words indicated his innocence.

Both of them, therefore, hurried home, and when near the hut, Kālaketu saw a strange sight, as though ten thousand moons illumined the vault of night. A damsel, whose beauty dazzled the eyes, was standing with gaze fixed on the sky. The glowing light of evening fell on her profuse black hair, tinting it with a golden hue. She looked like a statue of stainless marble carved in relief against the azure. She wore a crown on her head which shone in the light, the diamonds sparkling with wonderful brilliance. The majesty of her form struck the huntsman dumb. He fell to the ground, bowing down to her in reverence. After this he asked her who she was and what was her mission there. Caṇḍī stood silent without a word. Then Kālaketu said, "The home of a huntsman is deemed unholy. The bones of animals lie strewn around it, and it is filled with the smell of rotten meat. For any one, of your position, this is not a suitable place to come to. It will require you a bath in the Ganga to cleanse you of your sin, in coming to visit such foul quarters. Why is it, O mother, I ask again, you have come here? Caṇḍī still gave no reply. The hunter continued : "The world will speak ill of you if you remain in this home and infamy, you

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know, is death to woman. Come with me, leave the house and I am ready to lead you back to your home. But I shall not go alone with you ; Phullarā will accompany us, and we shall select a path frequented by our friends. In reply to this Caṇḍī uttered not a word, and Kālaketu said impatiently, "You are no doubt the daughter of a rich man and a rich man's wife too. I am only a poor huntsman whose touch is avoided by all. What business can there possibly be that would bring you to my house ? I humbly beg that you should leave this house at once." But Caṇḍī smiled and did not at all seem inclined to move. Then the huntsman said, "Be witness, O setting sun, that this woman means mischief", and taking his bow he aimed an arrow at her. To his great surprise he found, however, he could not shoot His hands seemed to be controlled by a mysterious power. The arrow could not be released and both the arrow and the bow became rigid in his hands. Phullarā came to his rescue, but could not take away either the bow or the arrow from her husband's hands. Kālaketu stood like one, turned to stone, and for causes unknown to himself, tears fell from his eyes. He tried to speak but could not. He seemed to be fixed to the spot by a spell and stood, looking like a painted archer.

Caṇḍī said , "My son, I am Caṇḍī. I have come to help you in your poverty. You will worship me on the third day of every week. Only place my ghaṭ in your home and there will be no end to your prosperity."

Kālaketu, now restored to speech, said "Pardon me, but how can I believe you to be Caṇḍī ? My whole life has been spent in wickedness. I have killed numberless animals; in fact killing is my avocation. You probably know some spell by which you have overpowered me. If you are really Caṇḍī, then mercifully show yourself to me, O Divine Mother, in that form in which you are worshipped by the world."

In a moment the figure of the damsel grew in size. The crown on her head seemed to touch the starry regions of the sky, and her ten arms holding the lotus, the discus, the trident, and other weapons were extended outwards in the ten directions. Her gracious face, full of majesty and glory, smiled on him with motherly love. Her apparel, bedecked with jewels, fluttered in the evening breeze. One of her feet was placed on a lion and the other on the demon-king Mahiṣāsura. Thus sublime and awe-inspiring, she revealed herself to the sight of the mortal couple and the winds threw treasures of flowers to the feet of the gracious mother of the universe.

Kālaketu and Phullarā with folded palms stood before Caṇḍī, tears still flowing from their eyes. Gradually the form of Caṇḍī faded away in the sky. The whole thing appeared to have been an illusion. The tint of the Divine Mother was merged in the colour of the Atasī flower which abounded in the place. Her hair vanished in the clouds. Her majesty spread itself in the quiet glow of the firmament, and slowly the glorious vision passed away. The earth and heaven appeared like the sacred emblem of her divine presence. Then, once more she stood before them in the form

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of the beautiful damsel standing at the cottage door and asking what boon the couple would beg of her. Kālaketu only half articulately said, "Oh mother, we want nothing more, our life is made blessed; our wants are all satisfied."

Caṇḍī now bestowed a valuable ring on the huntsman and showed them where a great treasure lay buried in seven jars. She also helped him to carry the treasure to his hut. Her command was that Kālaketu should found a kingdom in Gujrat with the money thus found and rule his subjects justly, and introduce the worship of Caṇḍī amongst them.

Next morning Kālaketu went forth with the ring to turn it into hard cash. The money-changer to whom he applied, was Murāri Sil, a dishonest fellow, who tried to cheat him of the precious possession by paying him a nominal value. But the diamond in the ring was peerless and Caṇḍī had told Kālaketu of its value. After much haggling the price was settled at seven crores of rupees.

With this money and the treasure found in the jars he proceeded to Gujrat where he cut down the forests and founded a city in honour of Caṇḍī. A great flood in the meantime had overwhelmed the kingdom of Kaliṅga and innumerable people there became homeless. With Bulan Mondal at their head they came to Gujrat in crowds to settle in this new kingdom. Amongst them came Bharu Datta, a knave who, with his glib tongue and high-sounding phrases waded his way into the confidence of king Kālaketu. But soon Bharu started oppressing the people, and as a consequence was turned out of Gujrat by order of the king. While in this plight he uttered a mysterious threat, saying, "Phullarā the queen will soon be reduced again to her old position as the wife of a huntsman. She will once more carry baskets on her head as she used to do." He then went to Kaliṅga and there gaining access to the court of the king, gave information as to how Kālaketu, formerly a poor huntman in his dominion, had now founded a new kingdom in Gujrat by taking away with him, nearly half the population of Kaliṅga. At this report the monarch's anger knew no bounds. He led a hostile expedition against Gujrat and Kālaketu was vanquished, captured and thrown into prison. There in deep despair the huntsman offered prayer to Caṇḍī. He was to be beheaded the next morning. In this desperate plight he looked upto heaven and prayed with all his heart to have once more a sight of that Mother of the Universe, who had mercifully visited his cottage when he was a huntsman. She came again and held out her gracious hand offering him her benediction. That night a terrible dream was dreamt by the king of Kaliṅga that his army was destroyed mysteriously by some unseen agency. He was so impressed that next day he released Kālaketu from prison and restored his kingdom. Bharu Datta was turned out from both the kingdoms.

Shortly after this, Kālaketu died and went to heaven, as Nīlāmvara, son of Indra, the period of the curse having expired. Phullarā who had been chhāyā, Nīlāmvara's wife and had been born as the daughter of Sanjoyketu with the object

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of sharing the misfortunes of her husband, accompanied him to heaven, on the expiration of her self-imposed term of life on earth.

Puṣpaketu, son of Kālaketu and Phullarā, then became the king of Gujrat.

We now pass on to the second of these two companion-stories, which although different, always go together forming a single volume of the maṅgala text.

STORY OF ŚRIMANTA SADĀGAR

Ratnamālā, a nymph of Indra's heaven, was under a curse and had been born on earth as Khullanā.

The merchant, Dhanapati was in the full vigour of his youth. He was a well-built man of handsome features well-versed in the urban learning of the day and immensely rich. He had a wife named Lahanā.

His favourite amusement was playing with pigeons. The male pigeon was taken to the forest and there let loose while its mate was kept in the house of Dhanapati—many miles off. The male pigeons would then, inspite of the long distance and difficult terrain, fly back home to join their companion and the homeward flight of the bird through the sky would be enthusiastically watched by the young men who sported with such pigeons. One day Dhanapati had released his male pigeons, as usual, in an adjoining wood. All of them returned except one which was pursued by a kite. Seeing no other way to escape from his enemy, the pigeon dropped to the ground and hid itself in the outer garments of a very young and fascinating maiden. This lady was no other than Khullanā—the daughter of Lakṣapati—the merchant. The girl was much pleased with the beauty of the bird and gave it shelter.

Now, Dhanapati waited some time for his favourite pigeon but when it was late and the wandering bird was not coming back, he commenced a vigorous search along with his companions for the missing bird. He ran along the steep edge of the hills, through thorny plants and briers, till breathless, coming to the limits of a village named Ichhaninagar, he heard that Lakṣapati's daughter Khullanā had taken possession of his pet bird. He at once hid in the mango groves where Khullanā was gaily rambling with her maids.

Khullanā knew that Dhanapati was the husband of her cousin Lahanā. This relationship gives a woman liberty in Hindu society to make a little fun and Khullanā did not allow the opportunity to slip. In coquettish tones, she argued with Dhanapati—now begging for his bird, that it had come of its own accord and she could not give it away to him. The kite would have killed it and as she had saved its life, Dhanapati had no right over it any more. The more the young merchant argued his point, the more did she smile sweetly and stood firm in her resolve not to return the pigeon.

The charming smiles of this young and lovely damsel made Dhanapati's head

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giddy. He forgot all about his pigeon and stood rooted to the spot lost in a reverie. The girl, however, returned the bird and disappeared with her maids. But the echo of her joyous laughter rang in Dhanapati's ears after she had gone.

His first work on returning home was to depute Janārdana, a Brahmin and a match-maker, to propose to Lakṣapati that he should give him his daughter in marriage to Dhanapati.

Lakṣapati could make no objection to such a proposal. Considering all points, where could he expect to find a better bride-groom than Dhanapati ? He had already a wife, it was true but people of his rank and position were scarcely expected to remain contented with one wife, and this could not be held as a disqualification. Lakṣapati's wife, however, objected to give her fair daughter to Dhanapati, because she knew his wife Lahanā to be a termagant. "It would be better", she said, "to drown our Khullanā in the Gangas than to give her away to a man who has already a wife and that wife of the temper of Lahanā." An astrologer was called in ; he examined the marks on the palm of Khullanā and prophesied that if she were not given to a man who already had a wife, she was sure to become a widow. Now widowhood in India is held more terrible than death. So the frightened mother immediately gave her consent. But Dhanapati himself had to obtain the permission of Lahanā to marry a second wife. The news of these negotiations had already reached Lahanā, and she sat in one corner of her room as angry as the summer-clouds, ready to hurl the thunder-bolt. But though a shrewd and obstinate she could be weak to the verge of folly. Dhanapati had nothing else to plead than to say a few sweet words to her : "You are so beautiful, my darling ; but having no one to aid you in the duties of the kitchen, you are growing sickly. How I pity your lot ! If you do not mind it, dear wife, I shall find you one who will be like a maid-servant in the kitchen and carry out all your orders in domestic affairs." He showed her also five tolas of gold which he intended to give to the goldsmith to make a pair of bracelets of a wonderfully beautiful pattern for her. Thus Khullanā was married to Dhanapati.

At that very time a pair of birds called śuka and sārı was purchased by the king of Ujāni. These birds had a marvellous gift; they could talk like human beings. As there is no artist in the country who could make a beautiful cage of gold for the birds and as the artists of Gauḍa were noted for their skill in making gold-cages, the king asked Dhanapati to go to Gaur and give orders for a first-class gold cage ; he was to see it done and carry it to Ujāni. While giving this order, the king smiled and said, "I depute you for this task because I know that you have recently married a very beautiful bride, and you will not wish to stay long at Gaur; I shall therefore have the thing done in the shortest possible time."

Dhanapati left Ujāni for Gaur consigning young and lovely Khullanā to the care of Lahanā. Now Lahanā bore Khullanā no grudge. True to the promises she

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had made to her husband, she treated the girl with great kindness, taking particular care to prepare dainties for her, and looking to her comfort with the watchful eyes of a loving sister. But Durvala, the maid-servant, did not like this state of things. As long as there was no quarrel between the co-wives, though she, the task of the maid-servant was but thankless drudgery. "As soon as there is a quarrel between such persons, either will hold my services dear if I can abuse the other." Thinking in this strain, she privately warned Lahanā against indulging in such affection for the co-wife. "Your dark thick hair is already strewn with gray", she said, "the hair of Khullanā on the other hand, is as black as a cluster of bees and as pleasant to see as the plumes of a peacock. Your cheeks are darkened by shadows of passing youth, whereas young Khullanā's face glows with the freshness of the dawn; while her beauty is gradually brightening, yours is waning. When the merchant returns, he will be drawn by the fresher charms of his young wife and your position will be permanently in kitchen. Why not take early steps to save yourself from such coming danger ? You are feeding a venomous snake with milk. Take care, or it may bite you and so put an end to your life".

Now, Lahanā as has already been said, was rather stupid. She lent a credulous ear to this mischievous advice, and asked Durvalā if she could help her with any device by which she might get rid of her co-wife or otherwise bring her husband completely within her own control. Durvalā went to Lilā, a Brahmin widow versed in the charms by which a wife may fully control her husband. She prescribed a charm which required the following ingredients: tortoise-claws, raven's blood, dragon's scales, bat's wool, dog's gall, lizard's intestine, and an owlet dwelling in the cavity of a rock. Ending her advice, however, Lilā said "This charm will doubtless have its due effect ; but I am not sure how far it will help you to gain your end. In some cases it fails and I cannot say, with certainty, that in yours it will be infallible. There is one thing, however, which I can assure you, will help you to win your husband's love and is better to mind, than all these medicinal charms put together." "What is that ?" asked Lahanā with eagerness. It is sweet words, Lilā said, and a loving temper that will act best of all to win the love of your husband. Lahanā said "But it is absurd ! I have hitherto ruled my house alone. If I find that he grows indifferent to me, while Khullanā is in high favour, I shall not be able to brook it. My course has always been like this. If I found a flaw in my husband, however, small it might be, I made much of it and continually harped upon his weak point. I cannot agree to live here like a tame lamb. It was foolish to send for you, Lilā, in order to receive this advice !" She then dismissed the wise woman and after consultation with Durvalā, had recourse to another device. She had a letter written, purporting to have been addressed to herself by Dhanapati, from Gaur. It ran as follows: "My blessings on you, my loving wife, Lahanā ! I hope you and all with you are

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all well. I am at Gaur and shall probably stay for sometime longer. I have some misgivings about Khullanā, and my decision is deliberate. I feel that my marriage with her has not been approved of by the gods. It was an inauspicious affair. No sooner was I married to her, than there came a command from the Rājāh of Ujāni requiring me to leave home and to sojourn in distant parts ; and since then I have had no peace of mind. It is not safe or desirable to treat Khullanā with love and affection, least providence be further enraged and hurl more miseries upon me. You must do as I say. As soon as you get this letter, strip her of all ornaments and fine apparel. Give her rag of coarse khuea cloth to wear, and appoint her to tend the sheep in the fields. Give her half a meal of coarse quality and let her sleep in the place where the rice is husked. Do not omit to carry out these orders."

Lahanā thought if Khullanā were treated in this way, her beauty would fade and she would never be able to gain full control over her husband's heart. This would happen as a matter of course from hardship, starvation and exposure.

This letter was enclosed in an envelope, and Lahanā, with tearful eyes, professing great love for Khullanā, met her and at the same time saying, that she was bound to carry out her husband's order, though she would do so with the greatest reluctance and her heart, in fact, was breaking at the thought of what was before her.

Now, Khullanā was very intelligent, and though not a shrewd like Lahanā, she could not be so easily made to yield to the stratagem without resistance. She saw the letter and pronounced it a forgery, declaring it impossible that her husband should write in such a manner about her. The handwriting was not his and the whole thing was the work of Lahanā in spite of the great love which she professed for her. A hot discussion was soon followed by an exchange of blows. Lahanā was the stronger of the two. So Khullanā could not long maintain the fight and had to yield to superior force.

Thereupon the youthful Khullanā, as beautiful as a picture, was clothed in rags and with only the leaf of a fig tree to protect her head from the sun, went out to the fields to tend the sheep. Unaccustomed to walking, she grew tired and weary and she could not manage the animals. They ran into the rice-fields and ate up the plants, while the owners reproached her. She wiped away her tears with one hand, while the other hand held the shepherd's crook. By this time the spring had come. The trees were hung with blossoms and the fields were covered with fresh green vendure. The bees hummed in concert with the songs of the birds ; and the Mādhavī, the Aśoka, and the Mālatī flowers looked like fringes on the border-line of the sky. Amidst all this beauty, Khullanā, inspite of her hardships, felt a longing to see her husband. She went up to the bee and begged it not to hum. She prayed to the Kokila to go to Gaur and bring by its cooings, to her husband's recollection the memory of Khullanā. She caressed the tender Mādhavī creeper, rich with

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the treasures of the spring that clung to the Aśoka tree and called it most fortunate to have its supporter at hand.

A few days passed in this manner and her beauty gradually faded. She could not eat the coarse food, she could not sleep on the hard ground, she could not manage the sheep that were placed in her charge. One day at noon time, as she was reposing in the shade of a tree, Caṇḍī appeared before her in a dream in the guise of her mother. "The sight of your misery rends my heart, Oh Khullanā" she said, "the sheep named Sarvasi has been eaten up by a fox. Lahanā will all but kill you to-day". The girl awoke with a start and sought for Sarvasi. Alas! Sarvasi was gone. Tears rolled down her cheeks, as she cried Sarvasi, Sarvasi all about the field. She did not abandon her search till evening. But the sheep was not found. Khullanā did not venture to return home, for fear of Lahanā's punishment. In the evening strolling all round the field with tearful eyes, famished, worn-out and fatigued as she was, she could no longer walk. The shades of evening spread over the earth. It was all so cool! There was a consolation in the very darkness of the night—a healing breadth in the breeze and Khullanā thought she was safe from the sight of men and began to weep in silence, resigning herself to Caṇḍī, when suddenly she saw at a little distance, lights kindled by five beautiful damsels. They were doing something which she could not understand. With slow pace she came up to them and introduced herself to these damsels, who were no other than five nymphs of Indra's heaven. They were grieved to hear of the miseries of Khullanā, and asked her to worship Caṇḍī as they were there doing, giving her every assurance that the cause of her grief would be removed thereby.

As Khullanā did not return home at night, Lahanā felt great anxiety about her safety. "Has any evil", she thought "befallen Khullanā? Who knows what has come upon her, she may have been killed by some wild beast, or which would be worse, she may have been taken away by wicked men, young and beautiful as she is! My husband will shortly return and what shall I say to him? He especially commended her to my charge." Lahanā felt uneasy and could not sleep all night.

That very night Dhanapati, the merchant, had a dream, in which Khullanā seemed to appear before him, and tenderly censured him for forgetting her so long. He felt a great desire to meet his young wife and as the cage was now ready, set out for home, the very next morning.

In the meantime Lahanā had sent her people to search for Khullanā. In the morning she came of her own accord and Lahanā having repented of her wickedness, received her with open arms, and began once more to show her all that loving care with which she had treated her before Durvalā had poisoned her mind against her.

Dhanapati returned to Ujāni. Thereafter an interview with the king Vikrama Kesari, from whom he received praise and rewards, he came home, and went straight to the inner apartments of his house. After a formal interview with Lahanā

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he hastened to meet Khullanā. She was dressed in the finest attire and looked exceedingly beautiful ! The merchant addressed her with loving words but the damsel would give no response, which only enhanced his eagerness to enjoy her company. When they were alone together, in answer to his words of endearment, tears flowed from her eyes. Her confidence was gradually won, and then she produced the letter given her by Lahanā, commanding that Khullanā should be sent away to the forest to tend the sheep. Dhanapati was taken by surprise at this disclosure, and heard with anger and regret the sad tale of the miseries endured by Khullanā in his absence. Being now convinced of her husband's affection, Khullanā willingly forgave the wickedness of the co-wife and gave free expression to the sweetness of her own feeling, while Dhanapati bitterly repented having left her in the care of so dangerous a woman as Lahanā.

Dhanapati next undertook a sea-voyage for trade. He fixed a day for setting out from home and called in an astrologer to find cut whether that date would be auspicious or not. The fortuneteller ventured to say that he disapproved of the day, but such a contradiction seemed to Dhanapati like impertinence, and he ordered his servants to turn the astrologer out of the house with contempt. Khullanā meanwhile was worshipping Caṇḍī in order to gain her favour and win her blessings for her husband on the eve of her departure.

When Dhanapati came to bid farewell to his wife and found her engaged in this worship of Caṇḍī, he grew very angry, and saying, "What witch is this you are worshipping, wife". He kicked over the ghaṭa and went away with a frown.

On the high sea, six ships of Dhanapati were all wrecked by a storm, which was sent by Caṇḍī, baring the Madhukara which was so to say, the flag-ship in which the merchant himself was sailing. After this disaster he went to Ceylon. Near that island in the great ocean he saw a strange sight. Lotuses with red petals and large green leaves were springing up all over the blue water, and were moving gently in the breeze. On the noblest and loveliest of these flowers was seated a woman of unparalleled beauty. Her majestic looks and the light that shone about her face spread a quiet glow over the blue water, and she looked as if painted against the blue horizon. One night almost have imagined that the lotuses blushed in shame at being eclipsed by the resplendent beauty of the damsel. And what was this woman doing? Wonder of wonders ! She had caught with one tender hand a huge elephant and with the other hand she was putting the trunk of the elephant into her mouth. The stem of the lotus was shaking under its strange load, in which the beautiful and the grotesque were fantastically blended, and Dhanapati cried out in wonder : "But how can the weak lotus bear so heavy a burden!"

He landed in Ceylon and had an interview with the king to whom he related this wonderful vision. The king only smiled and said it was a mad man's story, and

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all the courtiers laughed at him. It was a marvel, added the king, that his ship itself had not been swallowed up by the lady ! But when the merchant insisted on is point, and talked in all other respects like a sane man, he entered into an agreement with him, to the effect that he would forego half his kingdom and bestow it on Dhanapati if he could show him the same phenomenon. Should it prove, however, that all was a mere fantasy, as the king thought, his ship and all his property would be confiscated and he would be thrown into a dungeon for life for putting the monarch to such trouble.

They both embarked on a ship and reached the spot where Dhanapati had witnessed the extraordinary spectacle. But a wide space of blue water confronted them, huge blue waves, rolling in from the blue sea, blue waves, moving to the blue horizon, and nothing more—no lady, no lotus, no elephant met their eyes. The merchant looked everywhere in vain for them. Alas, he was thrown into a dungeon, and condemned to be there in chains for the remainder of his life.

At Ujāni, a son was born to Khullanā a lovely child whom everyone in the village loved dearly. He was named Śrīmanta. He played manly games with his comrades. The play of Ha-do-do by which the muscles become strong, was his favourite, but the pastoral games of Srī Kṛṣṇa were the craze of the young men of that period. One of the boys would act the part of the demon of the whirl-wind—Triṇāvarta. He would sweep down like a whirl-wind and surprise the others who were acting the parts of the Brindāvana-shepherds, and Śrīmanta, figuring as Kṛṣṇa, would kill Triṇāvarta after a severe battle. Sometimes a boy would take the part of Yaśodā, but Śrīmanta, the young Kṛṣṇa, proved too heavy for this, when the former tried to lift him in her arms. Poor Yaśodā fell to the ground with her Kṛṣṇa and the sound of laughter was heard among the boys, who enjoyed failure and success with equal zest. At one time Narasiṁha Dās, one of the companions of Śrīmanta, became Brahmā, the god with four faces, and took away a kid belonging to the shepherds. Śrīmanta, as Kṛṣṇa produced an illusion and in a mysterious way the kid was made to reappear, and Brāhma's attempt to thwart Kṛṣṇa was foiled.

Thus all that Kṛṣṇa did among the shepherds in the groves of Vrindā was re-enacted in Ujāni, and no one there played his part so well as Śrīmanta, the son of Dhanapati.

Then he was sent to a day-school belonging to Dvija Janārdan. The boy acquired deep knowledge in Sanskrit rhetoric and grammar in no time. He displayed, wonderful intelligence and power of grasping the texts. Whatever he laid his hands on, he did with marvellous grace, for surely his birth had been the result of a boon, granted by Caṇḍī to his mother Khullanā, as a reward for her life-long-devotion to that goddess in the midst of many sufferings.

Much as Śrīmanta was loved, however, his father's long and unexplained absence from home, cast a gloom on the family ; and going to school at the age of twelve,

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the sensitive child felt deeply hurt at the slight levelled against his birth by his teacher on the score of his father's long absence from home.

Now Śrīmanta was loved by all, he had never been accustomed to harshness. His teacher's remarks, therefore, cut him to the quick. He came to his home and shut himself up in a room alone, not even seeing his mother.

Khullanā made enquiries about him and discovered him in his solitude sobbing out his misery, and when his mother had asked him again and again what was the matter, he told her what the teacher had said, weeping all the while vehemently ; he expressed his desire to go at once in search of his father, wherever he might be, nor would he touch food, until his mother gave him permission to set out on this quest.

Poor Khullanā did not know what to do. Her dear lord had been away for more than twelve years. She bore a sorrow in her heart for which there was no cure. Every night when others were asleep, she would lie and weep for long hours till her eyes closing in sleep, she sometime dreamt that her husband had come back, and was speaking sweetly to her. But when morning dawned, she knew no joy, for it woke her up to stern reality When her neighbours would talk of their husbands she would retire to her room, with pale face, to hide her tears. The consolation of her life was her son Śrīmanta. When she saw him in such distress about his father, she felt that her heart would break. She was injured at a vital point and could only cry helplessly without trying to hide her tears. How would she be able to live without her son—a mere lad, who was the only solace of her lonely life ! But the boy, though so young, possessed unflinching determination. Khullanā, Lahanā, Durvalā and other inmates of the house tried all that was in their power to dissuade him from his course, but in vain ; and when nothing could shake his resolve, Khullanā sent information to king Vikrama Keśarī with a piteous representation of her case and asked his help in bringing Śrīmanta to his senses. The king readily consented to give his aid in counselling the boy to a right course ; but Śrīmanta would not touch food and seemed resolved to starve himself to death if permission was not granted him for going. When the king called him into his presence, he could not reply to him, his voice being chocked with tears.

It was very difficult to deal with such a strong minded boy. Khullanā gave him permission to undertake a sea-voyage, and young Śrīmanta gladly made himself ready for the journey. Khullanā gave him sound advice as to how he should proceed with his mission, and so did the king, who also ordered seven good ships to be built for him. They were made ready in a short time, and Śrīmanta set sail in them on an auspicious day.

Khullanā all the while was engaged in worshipping Caṇḍī. What else could she do in her utter despair ? Her husband was gone and now her child also was to be parted from her. The ghaṭa of Caṇḍī was her only solace in this deplorable condition. When the ships sailed, she stood looking with wistful eyes at the

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southern skies at which the unfurled sails seemed to be aiming. She resigned herself to the will of Caṇḍī and remained fixed to the spot like a statue.

Śrīmanta was over joyed as the sea-wind touched him. He was determined to find his father or die in the attempt. He had felt all along that his mother was sad, without being able to divine the seasons. He had always marked the melancholy expression of her lovely face, and he now understood that her sorrow was all for the absence of her lord. If he could not make his mother happy, what was the good of his living at all. "O Divine Mother Caṇḍī, do thou help this poor boy to gain his object," —he prayed day and night and the ships went on towards Ceylon.

Here is a long catalogue of the cargo and a detailed description of voyage in the text. Finally he came to Ceylon but near the island, at the same spot upon the water of the great Ocean, the same spectacle that had caused his father's trouble, met his eyes also. A large space of blue water was covered with lotuses and upon the finest and noblest of them, sat the same mysterious and beautiful woman with dishevelled hair she also was swallowing an elephant

The wonder which a spectacle like this naturally creates in one's mind had its effect on Śrīmanta and when landed in Ceylon in an interview with the king Śālivāhana, the very first thing that he related was concerning the woman seated on the lotus. "Why this is another crazy head", cried the king and he tried to convince the boy that it was a silly story, a mere fantasy of his brain; but Śrīmanta would not stop till an agreement was made that if he succeeded in showing it to the king, he would give him only daughter in marriage with half the kingdom as her dowry ; but if it proved a failure he should be beheaded. The king already had come to love the boy for his handsome appearance and keen intelligence, but as Śrīmanta seemed determined to bring ruin upon himself, there was no help for it.

They sailed to the spot on board a ship. But alas ! the illusion was not there. By order of the king Śrīmanta was now taken to the place of execution. He was now a young and beautiful, so lovely that the women shed tears as they saw him being carried for execution. Śrīmanta recollected his mother's face and tears came into his eyes. He had come to seek his father, but he was not destined to meet him in this world. He thought of his playmates of Ujāni, of the fair fields and meadows, where they sported, of Durvalā, the maid-servant, of his step mother Lahanā, of his grand-mother, and of every other person and object associated with his dear home, and tears which he could not check, streamed down his cheeks. On the scaffold he clasped his hands, and cried, "Caṇḍī, Caṇḍī, O Divine Mother ! look at your child ! O Caṇḍī, I would by your grace find out my father, I am now going to be taken away from both my parents". He collected himself in a moment, the growing emotions were checked, and he chanted all the names of Caṇḍī, beginning with each of the 34 characters of the Bengali Alphabet, and offered hymns to the goddess. Like a statue, he sat and looked like a yogī, though a mere lad. In his distress the boy

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attained the spirit of a resigned old man, and God being both father and mother to us, comes to man when he is thus resigned ; when we know that we are mere tools in the divine hands, and that He is the main actor on this stage, and knowing so cling unto Her as a helpless child does to the mother, then the divine grace becomes unfailing.

Caṇḍī appeared on the scaffold. The divine mother took Śrīmanta in her arms and the executioner was overawed by her presence. Information was sent to the king Śālivāhana that a mysterious woman was protecting Śrīmanta and the king ordered that the boy should be taken from her by force, if necessary, and executed without delay.

But the men who tried to apply force, were killed on the spot. Others were sent to their succour. They also shared the same fate and a vast army, belonging to the king, came to the field. Strange and mysterious creatures rose from underground, the very entrails of the earth, some with more heads than one and others without any head at all. Goblins called Kabandhas and Betāls worked destruction on the royal forces, whose heroic feats in arms, seemed like child's play before the destructive agencies unleased by Caṇḍī. The goblins took the skulls of dead soldiers, and filling them with warm blood, drank from them in wild and horrid ecstasy. They picked up heads that rolled in the fields, and with human entrails threaded them into ghastly garlands and put them on and danced. The witches cut corpses to pieces like butchers and dressed them, and sold them to new comers of their own sort. The heads of elephants were used as balls, with which a horrid-faced hobgoblin played, and others came to join the party, who like fabled anthropophagi, had heads beneath their shoulders. There, aloof from the field of destruction, sat Caṇḍī like a mother, and Śrīmanta clung to her like a helpless child, filled with courage and confidence, as is the baby by its mother's side.

King Śālivāhana heard the story and himself came to the field. There he witnessed this spectacle of destruction, and felt that it was Caṇḍī's wrath that had overtaken his army. He presented himself with reverence and humiliation before the goddess, and worshipped her, praying a thousand forgivenesses. Caṇḍī was propitiated. She restored the army to life and king Śālivāhana gave his daughter in marriage to Śrīmanta with half his kingdom for dowry. By the grace of Caṇḍī, the king now also saw the wonderful spectacle which she had created as an illusion to bewilder the father and the son on the waters of the sea; the thick array of lotuses blooming on all sides and the mysteriously beautiful woman in the act of swallowing an elephant.

Next came the pathetic interview between father and son. Dhanapati was imprisoned in a horrible dungeon. The prison house was so low that a child could not stand upright in it. The floor was covered with worms. Here in chains for twelve years with the coarsest of grain for food, the princely merchant Dhanapati

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had lain like an earth-worm. For these twelve years he had not shaved. So his beard fell down to his knees. His nails looked like the claws of a wild beast and his eyes were almost blind with cataract. The foot with which he had kicked the ghaṭa of Caṇḍī was heavy with elephantiasis.

By order of Śrīmanta the merchant was brought before him. Khullanā had described his father to him before he left Ujāni. The merchant, she said, had seven moles on the breast, and a black mark on the left side of his nose. He was tall, his eyes were large, and the grace of his person was like that of a god. Though so aged and afflicted with unsightly diseases, Śrīmanta was yet able to see instinctively that this was his father who stood before him in chains. He felt a satifaction which brought tears of joy to his eyes. He had the chains removed at once. The matted locks were combed and cleansed. A barber was employed to shave the beard and cut the hair, and anoint the body with perfumed oil. Śrīmanta now asked Dhanapati as to who he was, and what had brought him to Ceylon. Dhanapati said, "My name is Dhanapati Datta. I am a native of Ujāni in Maṅgalkoṭ in Burdwan. I came here to trade but owing to an optical illusion which completely overpowered me, I brought about my own misfortunes. The table would be a long one, and you need not listen, sir, to its details. How thankful am I to you, O prince for my release. If you permit, I may now start for my home to meet my beloved ones and my family."

Śrīmanta asked if he had left any children behind him. "I had two wives," said Dhanapati, "the younger Khullanā was to give birth to a child, but I could not wait at home to see the child born. If a child were born to her in due course, that one must be now a little more than twelve years of age", and here Dhanapati manifested extreme anguish of heart. Śrīmanta showed him the letter written by Dhanapati to Khullanā in which the merchant had alluded to the child that would be born to her. Dhanapati wept bitterly over the letter. It brought to his recollection the memory of his dear wife and all the sufferings he had passed through during these twelve years. He implored Śrīmanta to tell him how he came into possession of an article which belonged to his wife, and if he knew anything about Khullanā and other inmates of his house. Finally he said, the sight of you, dear sir, I do not know why, has filled my heart with great delight. If I had a son, he would have been exactly of your age". This was too much for Śrīmanta, who at these words fell prostrate at his father's feet, and said, "Father! I am your unfortunate son. I started from home with seven ships with the object of finding you. Gracious Heaven has at last granted my prayers. But how it pains me to see you in this condition".

Dhanapati would by no means agree to worship Caṇḍī, but Śrīmanta's entreaties became irresistible and eventually he yielded to them. As soon as he offered a flower to the cup of Caṇḍī, his diseases—the cataract in his eyes and the elephantiasis in his foot, were cured, and he once again became prince-like and full with the glory of vigorous manhood.

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King Śālivāhana came with a hundred excuses and entertained the father and the son with all means of courtesy. Śrīmanta sailed homewards with Suśīlā, the princess, whom he had married, and with immense riches and a good number of ships that he had received as a dowry, together with the riches and ships of his father, returned by the king with interest. In due time he reached Ujāni and the king there also gave Śrīmanta his own daughter in marriage. So with two wives he lived in happiness and prosperity, and Khullanā's happiness knew no bounds at having her dear lord back. They all lived many years in enjoyment of all kinds of earthly fortune, and zealously did they worship Caṇḍī whose grace had given them prosperity and happiness. In due time Khullanā, who, as has been already said, was a nymph of Indra's heaven, and Śrīmanta, who was the Gandharva named Mālādhara, both born on earth under a curse—came to the end of their earthly careers. They then ascended the heaven, and the worship of Caṇḍī spread in the country.

These two stories form the subject-matter of all poems on Caṇḍī. In the Chaitanya Bhāgavata, a book written about A.D. 1573[1] there is mention of these devotional songs which were generally sung at night. The complete sage took eight nights to be sung. Hence a poem in honour of Caṇḍī was divided into eight parts, called *Aṣṭamaṅgala*, each part being sung during one night. The poems must have been fairly long to engage the audience for eight successive nights.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE KĀVYA

Dvija Janārdan, an author who lived in the 16th century, in his poem on Caṇḍī, refers to the temple of Dvāravāsinī in Gaur. Dvāravāsinī was worshipped with great pomp by the Hindu and Buddhist kings of Gaur. With the fall of their power, the temple of the Goddess, where hundreds of pilgrims from different parts of the country used to assemble in order to offer prayers became deserted and eventually in the 16th century was reduced to a heap of bricks. Another poet named Manik Datta refers to the flourishing condition of this temple which must have belonged to an age not earlier than the 13th century.

Later writers of poems of *Maṅgal Caṇḍī* tried to identify this goddess Dvāravāsinī with Caṇḍī as described by *Mārkaṇḍeya*, but originally she had no connection whatever with the Purānic deity. *Maṅgal Caṇḍī* was a popular deity worshipped in the villages by the rustic people, mostly women, and the Purānic element came to be associated with Caṇḍī in the works of subsequent writers.

The well known Bengali poet Mukundarām is generally known by his title of Kavikaṅkan. He finished his celebrated Caṇḍī kāvya in A.D. 1589, when Man Singh was the governor of Bengal; this poet refers to Man Singh with great regard in the introductory canto of his work.

1. Sen, D.C., *Caitanya and his age*, 1922, p. 73.

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His poem is divided into three parts; besides the usual preliminaries in which he offers hymns to various gods and goddesses, he gives an account of himself and of his native village of Dāmunyā.

The first canto of the poem deals with eulogies directed to the god Śiva; this is evidently that first production to which he refers in his account of Dāmynyā. The sacrificial ceremony of Dakṣa, the catastrophe that befell him, the death of Satī who was re-born as Umā, and the austerities she passed through in her new incarnation with object of regaiṅing Śiva for her husband, the killing of Madan by the flame issuing from Śiva's third eye, the besailings of Rati, the wife of Madan, the marriage, the various domestic scenes of Kailās, the dispute between Śiva and Umā and the worship of Śiva by Indra and so forth, form the subject matter of the first canto. The second canto gives the story of Kālketu the hunter and the third deals with the story of the merchant-prince Dhanapati and his son Śrīmanta.

Outside Vaiṣṇava poetry the most significant work of the 16th. cent. is Caṇḍīmaṅgala by Mukundarām. The oldest writer of such poems who had earned reputation was Manik Datta, and Mukundaram mentions that he based his own work on the standardized narrative (Dāṁrā) of Manik Datta. But the poem of Manik Datta as known to us is a late 18th. cent. manuscript from North Bengal and this could not have been the work which inspired Mukundarām. Besides its other late features there are clear references in it to Chaitanya and his faith. The poem, however, is not altogether devoid of such material as are obviously old.

The author of this Caṇḍīmaṅgal could not have been old Manik Datta mentioned by Mukundarām. The traditional story of the 'original' Manik Datta who appears to have introduced the ritual song of Caṇḍī in south-Bengal (or Kaliṅga) is thus given in the poem of our (second) Manik Datta whose text was found from North Bengal.

On Caṇḍī's victory over the Asuras her supremacy was accepted by the gods. After a time the goddess wanted that human beings should also worship her by celebrating her deeds in song and dance. Nārada advised her to reveal her ritual to Manik Datta, a deformed man, deaf and lame. In the guise of a very very old woman Caṇḍi came to Manik Datta when he was in deep slumber. She told him to formulate her popular ritual and to write her story in verse. She assured him that his two sons Raghu and Rāghab would be his assistants. She then passed a divine hand over the sleeping man, and his deformities vanished. The goddess disappeared after leaving the book of her ritual at the top of the bed. On waking up in the morning Manik Datta found himself a new man. As the book of ritual given to him by Caṇḍī was written in sanskrit which he could not read he had to take the help of one Śrīkaṇṭha Pundit. The pundit explained to him the sanskrit verses and Manik Datta rendered those into Bengali verse. The poem was complete in some three hundred lyric verses (*Nācāḍī.*) He now set up a party to sing and chant the songs

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publicly. Manik Datta himself was the main singer (*Gāyak*), his sons Raghu and Rāghab acted as the supporting singers (*Pāli*), and Śrīkaṇṭha Pundit played the drum (*mṛdaṅga*). The party went to Kaliṅga and sang and chanted the verses moving from door to door. The Caṇḍīmaṅgal music thus became widely popular. The king of Kaliṅga came to learn that a new mode of worship by song and dance was distracting his men from their duty. Manik Datta was summoned to account for his peculiar activities. He told the king his story but the king refused to believe that Caṇḍī would care to offer grace to such an insignificant person, and he had the poet imprisoned as a suspect. At night the goddess came to the sleeping king with a ferocious mien and told him to release the poet in the morning. After this incident the king became the best patron of Manik Datta.

Another *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* was written by Mādhab who was a Brahmin (*dvija*) in 1579. According to this poet, Akbar, an incarnation of the epic hero Arjuna, was the master of Bengal. The poet says he was a native of Satgaon on the banks of the Hooghly, but there is some doubt about the authenticity of this statement. All the manuscripts of the poem (the oldest dated only in 1759) came from remote East Bengal (now Bangladesh), mainly from the district of Chittagong, and none from West Bengal. There can be only one explanation, viz. that since the poet or his family had migrated to that place and the poem was written there, there was no chance of its being known in West Bengal.

Mādhab's poem is a comparatively short work. The introductory story of Śiva and Satī, Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī and their domestic life are absent. Instead there is a very short episode depicting the goddess's victory over the demon Maṅgal accounting for her name Maṅgal Caṇḍī. The story of Kālketu is much shorter than the story of Dhanapati. The canvas of the poem being narrow there was little room for the development of the characters.

Caṇḍīmaṅgal of Mukundarām superseded the earlier works and forestalled any serious later attempt. It is a work substantial in volume and representative in character, and it served as a model to be followed by all the later writers of 'Maṅgal' poetry in West Bengal. By prefacing his poem with an autobiographical account, Mukundarām started a style among the narrative poets of West Bengal which replaced the earlier dream excuse by a manifestation of the divinity commanding its celebration in poetry and song.

Mukundarām belonged to a Brāhmin family of Dāminyā (now in the southern border of the district of Burdwan) in West Bengal, depending on the produce of a few acres of ancestral land. During the critical days when the Pathan power was about to give way to the arms of Sher Shah in West Bengal the agrarian economy of West Bengal was almost completely upset. The old Pathan and Hindu zamindars were being deprived of their possessions which were being given to Afghan chiefs and many of their tenants who could not produce any documentary evidence suddenly

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found themselves landless. The Mughal administration brought revenue and land settlement officers from outside the province and they had little understanding of the situation in Bengal and these officers had no sympathy for the poor farmers and land owners of the region. The new rulers created new zamindars who wanted to grab as much land and collect as much rent as they could.

Mukundarām was one of the victims of this new development. His ancestral inheritance, a few acres of cultivated land, had been quite ample for simple needs of his family for some seven generations. Being a sub-tenant of a Hindu zaminder who was loyal to the house of Husain Sha and who was now in disfavour, Mukundarām's land was confiscated. But he was not alone to suffer. The distress that befell the common people of Bengal is feelingly described by him.

Mukundarām's poem is in three parts. The first part stands as an independent poem. It deals with the Purāṇic story of Śiva, of his first wife Sati and of his second wife Pārvatī (Gaurī, Durgā or Caṇḍī). Much of its contents came from indigenous folk poetry ; for instance the marriage ceremony of Śiva and Pārvatī, Śiva's continuing to live with his father-in-law's family, and the poverty-stricken and unpleasant home-life of the divine couple. This part may have been written as an independent 'Śivāyaṇa' poem when the poet had not left home and had been performing the daily worship of the village deity. In the treatment of the Śiva story, Mukundarām was closely imitated by the later writers on the theme such as Rāmeśvara and Bhāratchandra (18th. cent.) but he had never been surpassed by any of the later poets. The second part of the poem is the "*Ākhaṭi Khaṇḍa*" (fowler section) and the third part the "*Banik Khaṇḍa*" (Merchant section).

THE TWO PARTS OF THE STORY

The narrative tradition associated with the goddess Caṇḍī contain two independent stories. The first one is the older. The second story follows the usual pattern of the *Maṅgalkāvya*. Its hero is an influencial merchant and he and his son are compelled to pay homage to the goddess who apparently had not yet obtained homage from the upper classes of the society in Bengal. In the second story the goddess appears as the guardian deity of lost animals and of lost men. The first story has retained, more or less, the original simple form of folklore. The structure of the second story is complex. In its older and simpler form it was a '*Vrata Kathā*'.[2] One interesting feature of the second story is the miraculous sight, on the surface of the open sea, of a divine girl seated on a full blown lotus and alternately devouring and

2. A *Vrata-Kathā* is a short narrative recited in women's rites held at home and generally without the assistance of a brāhmin priest.

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belching out a couple of elephants[3]. This sight brought disaster to the hero and his son. Merchants were devotees of *Kamalā* (Lakṣmī) who was generally represented as a lady seated on a lotus and two elephants pouring water on her.

3. This miracle is known as '*Kāmale-Kāminī*' (the lady on the lotus).

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CHAPTER THREE

Social and Cultural Imports of Caṇḍī Maṅgal Story

THE STUDY of the cult of Caṇḍī necessitates the study of the socio-cultural background of Bengal at the time when the worship of Caṇḍī had originated. It is a popular belief among scholars that the origin of this goddess may be traced back to the early period of the Pāla rule. Attempt shall be made here from a study of the narrative poems of Caṇḍī better known as Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya to show how the concept of Caṇḍī had grown through centuries, and achieved a full development during the early mediaeval age. One cannot trace the history of the development of religious ideas unless the historical background is taken into consideration,

For that purpose, let us trace the socio-religious condition of Bengal under the Pālas and Senas, including the other minor dynasties ruling during the period.

The beginning of Pāla rule heralded a new epoch in the history of Bengal in all branches of culture and civilization. The period marked the evolution of the Bengali people and their language and culture. The vernacular language of Bengal, although still in the Middle Indo-Aryan stage, took a definite form, which may be described as proto-Bengali, by A.D. 800 when Dharmapāla the founder of Pāla rule was on the throne. The foundation of Pāla empire synchronized with the birth of a nation having many new dimensions.

As regards religion, the Pāla kings were great devotees of Mahāyāna Buddhism and stood for the cause of Buddhism both in their domains and outside. But they were tolerant of other religious sects and sympathetic towards Brāhmaṇism. Their attitude is well indicated from the fact that they employed orthodox Brāhmaṇas as their hereditary chief ministers. The religious outlook of the Indians was generally tolerant and this characteristic feature of the age has been noticed by many scholars.

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This attitude has been viewed by one in the following way :— "The religious life in India is marked about this time by a spirit of catholicity and mutual respect and understanding which is hardly compatible with a deliberate persecution on sectarian grounds. The barriers between the different religious sects were fast coming down, and Buddhism, as presented in the documents of the Pāla period, exhibits the new tendency of eclecticism such as we find so strikingly illustrated in the career of Harshavardhana[1]. This period also witnessed a high degree of mutual toleration and peaceful coexistence of the two major religious sects namely the Brāhmaṇical Hindus and the Buddhists and also borrowing and incorporating some divinities from one pantheon into another. One of the most notable features in the history of religion of this period was the growth and proliferation of Tāntricism within all the prevailing religious sects.

In appears that Buddhism had gained a considerable premium in Bengal and Bihar due to royal patronage under the Pāla supremacy[2]. Under the Pālas and some other rulers of the contemporary age such as Kāntideva and the Chandra kings of East Bengal, Buddhism practised in this region had gained an international prestige, from Tibet in the north to the islands of the Malay Archipelago in the south[3]. But the general view as to the predominance of Buddhism in this period is rejected by P C. Bagchi[4], who states that 'the patronage of the Pālas no doubt gave an impetus to Buddhism and saved the religion from the fate which overtook it in the rest of India, but does not seem to have materially affected the dominant position of the brāhmaṇical religion. For it is worthy of note that by far the large majority of images and inscriptions which may be assigned to this period between A.D. 800 to A.D. 1200 are brāhmaṇical and not Buddhist'. Prof. Bagchi has made this conclusion primarily on the basis of the survey of images and from the inscriptions belonging to this period. But in this respect Prof. N.R. Ray[5] argues in a different way. He points out that the way of worship followed by the Vajrayāna Buddhists as depicted in the works of the Siddhāchāryas and some Mahāyāna teachers was a mystical one, involving the worship of the concept of a deity in the imagination without the use of an image. For this reason there are few images of the greater Buddhist deities of the Pāla period, though the Buddhist works are full of their descriptions. From this we can safely assume that the predominance of Brāhmanic images does not disprove the advantageous position enjoyed by Buddhism in Bengal between the 9th to 11th century A.D. During this period several other rulers such as as Kāntideva of

1. *HB*, vol. I, p. 416 ; Cf. *HCIP*, vol. V, p. 256.
2. Paul, P.L. *EIB*, vol. II, p. 71f ; *S.P.P.* vol. XXXI, 3rd. issue, pp. 107f.
3. *HB*, vol. I, p. 417.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
5. Ray, N.R. *BI* (*Adi parva*), p. 649.

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Harikela and Trailokya Chandra and his son Śrī Chandra, who had ruled over some portions of southern and eastern Bengal, also subscribed to the Buddhist faith. One of the important centres of Tāntric Buddhism was Vaṅgāla, which was then ruled by the Buddhist Chandra kings. Even the legendary king Gopichandra or Govindachandra, who renounced the world and had become an adherent of Tāntric Buddhism is said to have been a member of the Chandra dynasty, and the wide-famed Buddhist Siddhāchārya Atīśa Dīpaṅkara is said to have come of a royal family of Vikramapura in east Bengal[6].

During the reigns of the Sena kings, however, who migrated from the Karṇāṭa country and were Brāhmaṇas by caste, Brāhmaṇism had emerged as the dominant religion in Bengal. The Senas and Varmans who had wrested from the Pālas and the Candras the suzerainty over Gauda and Vaṅga had actively worked for the welfare and promotion of the Brahmanical religion, which had lost its position of being the chief religion of the kings of Bengal for about four hundred years. Unlike the Pālas and Candras, the Senas and Varmans were not well disposed towards religious sects other than their own[7]. There are few references to any direct oppression of the Buddhists by the Senas and Varmans but severe criticism of Buddhism and disrespect to its followers are well attested from the inscriptional and literary evidence of this period[8]. Moreover the temper of the age towards Buddhism can be well shown by epigraphic evidences. It is known that a Vaṅgāla army had once burnt a part of the monastery of Somapura, where a Bhikshu died in the conflagration. Prof. Ray thinks that this great monastery was burnt by the soldiers of Jātavarman[9], the Varman king of east Bengal. During the Sena-Varman period Buddhism began to loose its hold rapidly and received its death-blow from the Muslims who came to Bengal under the leadership of Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji about the year A.D. 1202. After the fall of the Pālas the fate of Buddhism in Eastern India seems to have met the same fate as in the rest of India. Some scholars think that from this time onwards the Brahmins had assimilated the Buddhists' literature, science, philosophy and logic into their own religious tradition[10]. Buddhism of this period has been described by J.N. Farquhar as "slowly dying, poisoned by Tāntrism and weakened by Hindu violence and criticism"[11].

There was much difference between Buddhism of pre-Pāla age, as noticed by the

6. *HB*, vol. I, p. 418.
7. Sen, D.C. *Brihat Baṅga*, pp. 528-30 ;
   Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, pp. 667-68.
8. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.* p. 667f. ; S.P.P., vol. XXXVII, p. 209
9. *EI*, XXI, 97 ; Ray, N.R. *op. cit.* p. 291.
10. Sen. D.C. *Brihat Baṅga*, p. 331 ; *S.P.P.*, vol. XXXVI, pp. 1-21.
11. Farquhar, J.N. *An outlines of the Religious Literature of India*, p. 27.

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Chinese pilgrims and also found reflected in epigraphical and archaeological records, and Buddhism during the Pāla-Sena period. Buddhism of Pāla times was not only marked by "the decadence of pure Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism but also the appearance of a new phase of the religion, in which the original ethical and philosophical principles were superimposed in such a way by an esoteric Yogic system combined with endless rituals and forms of worship, that it could hardly be called Buddhism any longer . . . . The religion lost itself in the maze of mysticism and was engulfed by a host of *mudrās* (finger-gestures or physical postures), *maṇḍalas* (mystical diagrams) *kriyās* (rites and ceremonies), and *charyās* (meditational practices and observances for external and internal purity). The teachings of one of the noblest minds were thus deformed into a system of magical spells, exorcisms, spirit beliefs and worship of demons and divinities".[12] While this judgment may seem unduly severe, it seems that the apostles of Mahāyāna Buddhism made their religion such as would attract and suit the masses, who were very fond of worshipping personal deities as they well understood that the ordinary people could never properly understand any higher philosophy and theology. The revolutionary change in Buddhism was one of the stages in the development of Tāntric Buddhism.

It is believed that many Tāntric rites are older than the time of Buddha[13] Tradition holds that Asaṅga, who flourished in the 4th or 5th century A.D., had been responsible for the growth of Tāntric Buddhism, which arose out of the yogic practices and esotericism of the Yogāchāra school. It is even claimed by B. Bhattacharyya that Buddha himself had introduced some Tāntric elements into Buddhism : he writes "Though Buddha himself was antagonistic to all sorts of sacrifices, necromancy, sorcery, or magic, he is credited, nevertheless with having given instructions concerning *Mudrās*, *Maṇḍalas* and *Tantras*. etc., so that by virtue of these prosperity in this world could be attained by his less advanced disciples, who seemed to care more for this world than for *Nirvāṇa*' preached by him. India in Buddha's time was so steeped in superstitions that any religion which dared forbid all kinds of magic, sorcery and necromancy could hardly hope to withstand popular opposition. A clever organiser as Buddha was, he had not failed to notice the importance of incorporating magical practices in his religion to make it popular from all points of view and attract more adherents thereby".[14] This theory is objected to by S.K. De[15] and S.B. Dasgupta[16]. We have no reference to such practices in the

12. *H.C.I P.*, vol. IV, p. 258 ; cf. Farquhar, *op. cit.*, p. 209 ; Bhandarkar and others, ed., *B.C. Law volume*, part-I pp. 75-87.
13. *J.R.A.S.*. 1904, p. 557.
14. Bhattacharyya, B. *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* pp. 48-49.
15. *New Indian Antiquary*, vol. I, p. 2.
16. Dasgupta, S.B. *ORC*, p. 19.

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testimony of the Chinese pilgrims who visited India between A.D. 400 to 700[17] Farquhar holds that the Tantras had taken a definite shape only after the 7th century A.D.[18] But on the basis of the discovery of a Buddhist Tāntric work entitled *Ushṇīshavijayā dhāranī* discovered in the Horiuzi Monastery of Japan, which from inscriptional references, N.N. Vasu asserted that śakti worship was already prevalent throughout India in the 5th. cent A.D.[19] The same scholar writes that "several images of the śakti cult were imported into India from countries lying north of the Himālayas. We find mention of this fact in some of the Tantras. In *Rudra-Yāmala* and other Hindu Tantras the worship of Tārā is said to have been brought by Vaśiṣṭha from China. Similarly in the Buddhist Tantra of Nepal called *Sādhanamālā* it is mentioned that the worship of Ekajaṭā was brought to India by Nāgārjuna from Bhoṭa or Tibet"[20]. The Chinese translation of the *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghoṣa (XIII 21, 26) refers to the Tāntric goddess Kālī. It was noticed by Hiuen Tsang that the image of Tārā was being worshipped in India at his time [1]. Based on these evidences many scholars have expressed their opinion that Tāntric elements had already been existing in Buddhism from an early age.

Whatever may have been the date of the introduction of Tāntric elements in Buddhism, these elements became important in Mahāyāna Buddhist circles early in the 8th cent. A.D. As a result "their pantheon, characteristic mythology, their transcendental philosophy, their principles of life and of salvation, everything is thrown into topsyturvydom".[22] This view of de la Vallee Poussin had also been supported by Kern, who wrote "The decline of Buddhism in India from the 8th century downwards nearly coincides with the growing influence of Tāntrism and sorcery, which stand to each other in relation of theory to practice".[23] However, during the period between the 8th and 11th centuries Tāntric Mahāyāna Buddhism underwent various changes, from which developed certain other *Yānas*, such as Mantrayāna, Vajrayāna, Kālachakrayāna and Sahajayāna, having few differences in their metaphysics but considerable distinctions in their practices. All these *Yānas* lay stress on *Haṭha-Yoga*. The place of their origin cannot be traced with certainty, but it is generally agreed that most of these later forms of Buddhism developed in the Pāla Empire.[24] And

17. *New Indian Antiquary*, vol-I. p. 1f.
18. Farquhar, *op. cit.*, pp. 199ff.
19. Vasu. *ASM*, pp. L-LI.
20. *Ibid.*, p. LVIII.
21. Mitra, R.C. *DBI*, p. 68.
22. Mitra, *op. cit.*, p. 65 ; cf., de la Vallee Poussin, *Bouddhisme, opinion sur l 'historie de la dogmatique*, p. 397.
23. Kern, H. *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p 133.
24. Ray, N.R. *op, cit.*, p. 639.

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again Buddhist Tāntrism lays stress upon "the theological principle of duality in non-duality, and holds that the ultimate non-dual reality possesses in its nature the potency of two aspects of attributes. These two aspects of the absolute reality are conceived as Śiva and Śakti in Brāhmanical Tāntrism and *Prajñā* and *Upāya* in Buddhist Tāntrism".[25] "The Yogic practices involving the physical and physiological union of the *Prajñā* and the *Upāya* lead to the inner union of the two, and through this yogic union is produced supreme bliss (*mahāsukha*) which, according to the Buddhist and all other schools of Tantra, is the very nature of the Absolute".[26]

On the other hand, as a result of the fusion of Tāntric Brāhmanism and Śaktism on the one side and mystical Buddhism on the other, a new school of Śaktism known as the *Kaula* school had its origin in this period. As in other sects, divisions also arose in the *Kaula* school. Among the *Kaula* sects the most prominent were the Yogini Kaulas believed to have been founded by the well known saint Matsyendranātha. It is believed by many that this Matsyendranātha was identical with Luipāda, one of the 84 celebrated Buddhist Siddhāchāryas. Many scholars also hold the view that this mystic form of Buddhism was not only fused with Tāntric Brāhmanism and Śaktism but also had helped in producing certain other well known religious groups such as the Nāthas, Avadhūtas, Sahajiyās, Bāuls etc in the period.[27]

Tāranāth tells us that, before the establishment of the Pāla dynasty by Gopāla as also during his reign, Buddhism, which had hitherto only been popular through the fostering care of royal support had suffered terribly in Bengal due to lack of patronage. By this time many Buddhist monasteries and Vihāras were ruined and many others were almost in ruins. Those Vihāras which survived were again occupied by tīrthikas as their residences.[28] With the establishment of the Pāla rule in Bengal Buddhism once again became a vital force. Under the direct patronage of the Pāla kings many Buddhist monasteries and vihāras were built and old ones were reconstructed. Besides the famous Somapura and Jagaddala vihāras, numerous other vihāras were constructed in various parts of Bengal.[29] These monasteries and vihāras became centres of Buddhist learning and culture. Many teachers known as Siddhas, numbering by tradition, 84 appeared during the period between the 10th and 12th centuries A.D., they had preached certain new mystical ideas and beliefs helping the development of different Buddhist cults in this period. These doctrines appear to have spread throughout the whole of India.[30]

25. *H.C.I.P.*, vol. V, p. 407.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 409.
27. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 422-25.
28. Ray, N.R. *op, cit.*, p. 641.
29. *HB*, vol. I, p. 417.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 419.

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It has been proved that almost all the Buddhist images of gods and goddesses found in Bengal may be assigned to between the 9th and the 11th centuries A.D.[31] Dr. Ray calls this period "the golden age of Buddhism in Bengal".[32] A good number of Buddhist images, including not only those representing the Buddha in various manifestations and poses but also numerous Tāntric goddesses, have been discovered in Bengal and are well preserved in various local museums.[33] Among the female divinities, the different forms of Tārā, e.g. Khadiravanī Tārā, Bhaṛkuṭī Tārā, Vajra Tārā, Mārīchī, Parṇaśavarī, Hārītī, Chunḍā, and Prajñāpāramitā, deserve special mention. The images of Tārā, in their various forms are more numerous than the images of male divinities, and thus it appears that the worship of the female principle had become more widespread and popular than that of the male divinities in Bengal. This also suggests that Bengal has ever been a fertile field for the growth and development of the Śakti cult.

Jainism was once a quite popular religious pursued in Bengal having quite a large number of adherents. But it had lost its foothold after the 7th century. During the visit of Yuan Chwang there were a good number of Nirgranthas in Bengal.[34] After that there is no direct evidence of the existence of the Jainas either in inscriptions or in literature. The only evidence which indicates the survival of the cult is the discovery of a few images of Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras from different parts of Rāḍha area. From stylistic viewpoint these images have been assigned to the Pāla period.[35] The view that the Nirgrantha religion was not altogether forgotten in Bengal is supported by literary evidence, which records a pilgrimage of Vāstupāla, the minister of the Vāghela king Vīradhavala of Gujrat who was accompanied by the Saṁghapatis or leading Jaina monks of Lāṭa, Gauḍa, Maru, Dhārā, Avantī and Vaṅga.[36] This evidence suggests that even down to the 13th century there were organised Jaina institutions in Bengal. It has also been suggested that Mallikāryuṇa Sūri, a 12th century writer on astrology who flourished in Vaṅga, was a Jaina, as he has the title Sūri commonly used by Jaina teachers.[37] This view is objected to by B. Dutta simply because the writer pays homage to the Hindu gods Gaṇapati, Viṣṇu and Krishṇa.[38] Dr. Ray suggests that probably during the Pāla period a few of the Jaina Bhikshus and Upāsakas were converted to the Buddhist faith and the rest were

31. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, p. 649.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 466-74 ; N.R. Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 643-49.
34. Paul, P.L. *op. cit.*, p. 73 ; *H.B.*, p. 410.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 71 ; *H.B.*, pp. 464-65 ; N.R. Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 650.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 71 ; N.R Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 650.
37. Paul, P.L. *EHB*, pp. 69-70.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 70 fn.

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merged with the Kāpālikas and Avadhūta sects in the later period.[39] Jainism also did not escape Tāntric influences Dr. B.C. Bhattacharya notes that the votaries of Śvetāmbara sect worshipped Kuladevīs or Tāntric goddesses, whose numbers vary in the different texts.[40] He adds that "this predominant Tāntric element in iconography seems to be represented by the Śvetāmbara sect who like the Mahāyāna Buddhists, developed, by assimilation and invention, a Tāntric system of their own".[41]

It is believed that Vedic and Purāṇic culture first began to have a significant influence in Bengali society from the time of the Guptas ; it gathered strength in the Pāla period and became dominant during the time of the Sena and Varman rule.[42]

Among the Brāhmanical religious sects Vaishṇavism occupied the foremost, place, as has been proved by epigraphic and iconographic sources. Though the Pālas and the early Senas were Buddhists and Śaivas respectively, early rulers of these dynasties are known to have supported the Vaiṣṇavite cult.[43] The Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla records a land grant for a temple of Nārāyaṇa, and during the reign of Nārāyaṇapāla a Garuḍa pillar was erected. The Deopārā stone inscription of Vijayasena records a gift to a temple of *Pradyumneśvara* (a special form of Harihara). The discovery of a large number of Viṣṇu images of this period in Bengal clearly indicates the wide popularity of the cult, and this is also corroborated by inscriptional evidence. Viṣṇu is usually represented as a standing figure with four hands holding his four well-known attributes namely the conch shell, the wheel, the mace and the lotus. He is shown accompanied by his two consorts Lakshmī and Sarasvatī ; the figure of his vāhana Garuḍa is shown under his feet Sometimes the Devī Vasumatī in place of Sarasvatī and the two door keepers of Vaikuṇṭha, Jayā and Vijayā, also appear in such images.[44] It is believed that it was Bengal Vaishnavism that systematised the theory of avatāras.[45] Jayadeva, the court poet of Lakshmaṇasena, mentions a list of ten incarnations of Viṣṇu. A few images representing the ten avatāras together have been found in Bengal,[46] and independent images of these incarnations were also quite popular.[47]

39. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, p. 612.
40. Bhattacharya, *Jaina Iconography*, p. 23.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 23ff.
42. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 396-99.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
44. Paul, P.L. *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 92 ; N.R. Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 617.
45. *HB*, vol. I. p. 403.
46. Bhattasali, N.K. *I.B.B.S.D.M.*, p. 80.
47. Banerjee, R.D. *E.I.S.M.S.*, p. 103ff.; H.B., pp. 435-37.

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During the reign of the Senas a new type of Viṣṇu image showing the figure of goddess Lakṣmī on the lap of Viṣṇu and called Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa image came into vogue. Dr. N.R. Ray thinks that the conception of this type of image and the worship of this forms were brought by the Sena kings to Bengal from South India, as the Senas worshipped Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa as their tutelary deity.[48] Separate images of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are not common, but the existence of a few of such images suggest that both the goddesses were also worshipped as independent cult images.[49]

One of the most notable developments of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism of the 12th century seems to be the development of adoration of the divine love of Kriṣṇa and Rādhā, met with in the poem *Gīta-Govinda* written py Jaydeva, the court poet of the Seṇa king Laksmaṇasena. The origin of this conception cannot be located elsewhere. P.C. Bagchi[50] and N.R. Ray[51] suggest that this Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult had originated in Bengal only in the 12th century. K.N. Dikshit attempted to throw some light on this cult in a study of Pāhārpur terracottas and had identified a male and a female figure represented in an amorous position upon a panel at Pāhārpur as Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.[52] But this view is objected to by Prof. S.K. Saraswati who suggests that the female figure is either Rukmiṇī or Satyabhāmā[53]. The identification of the latter scholar is supported by Prof. P.C. Bagchi.[54] The Belavā inscription of Bhojavarman records the amorous activities of Kṛṣṇa with a hundred gopīs, without mentioning any particular gopī such as Rādhā. The emergence of Rādhā as the Śakti of Kṛṣṇa is indicative of the growing influence of Śakti cult during this period. It also points to the time honoured belief of the masses, whether Hindu or Buddhist that the supreme reality can only be attained through the Śakti of each divinity. Another interesting feature of Bengal Vaishnavism is the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism on Viṣṇu images.[55]

Inscriptional evidence and the discoveries of a number of Śaivite icons give evidence of the wide popularity of Śaivism in Bengal during the Pāla-sena period. The Pāla kings were Buddhists but a few of them had expressed their respect for Brāhmanical deities like Śiva and Viṣṇu. On the other hand most of the Senas were primarily worshippers of Śiva and even Lakshmaṇasena and his successors, Keśava and Viśvarūpa who were Vaishnavas also paid homage to their tutelary deity,

48. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, p. 660.
49. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 439f.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
51. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, p. 662.
52. *ASIAR*, 1926-27, pp. 142ff. pl. XXXIIC.
53. *HB*, vol. I, p. 403, fn.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, p. 433f; N.R. Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 619, 660.

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Sadāśiva.[56] During this period Śiva was worshipped in various forms, among which those known as Sadāśiva, Chandraśekhara, Nṛtyamūrti, Āliṅgana, Umā Maheśvara Ardhanārīśvara, Kalyāṇasundara or Śiva-vivāha and *Aghora-Rudra* types deserve special mention. These images again can be classified under two heads—one representing the *saumya* or placid aspect of Śiva, and the other his terrific aspect. Still more important and popular was the worship of Śiva as a phallic emblem, a custom which apparently goes back to the Harappā culture.[57] From the Pāhārpur excavations many such Śiva liṅgas have been discovered. Among them the *ekamukha* variety is the commonest. Phallic emblems of stone have been discovered not only in Pāhārpur but also in other parts of Bengal. Images of the placid aspect of Śiva have also been unearthed. It has been suggested that the conception of the Sadāśiva variety of image was brought from south India[58] but this view is objected to by Dr. J.N. Banerjea who strongly suggests its north Indian origin.[59] The discovery of Āliṅgana Chandraśekhara or Umā-Maheśvara-mūrti in Bengal suggests that tāntric influence had prompted the people to worship Śiva along with his Śakti.[60] A few images of the terrific aspect of Śiva as Aghora-Rudra and Vaṭuka-Bhairava have also been discovered in Bengal.

Members of the family of Śiva such as Gaṇapati and Kārtikeya were also worshipped as independent deities. Many images of Gaṇeśa of various types have been found in Bengal, though there is little evidence that the Gāṇapatya sect was of any consequence in Bengal. However, Gaṇeśa was worshipped widely and it has been suggested that "as he was regarded as the remover of all obstacles and bestower of success, he had an assured position not only among the various Brahmanical sectaries, but also, to a lesser extent, even among the followers of some heterodox creeds".[61] Images of Kārtikeya are not very common in Bengal. From the inscriptional evidence it is held that the Paśupati sect of Śaivism was also current in Bengal.[62] Śaivism was also connected with Śāktim, as many Devī images were worshipped by the people and most of them were thought of as the Śaktis of Śiva.

So far we have discussed the worship of Śiva according to the Vedic and the Purāṇic conceptions. Side by side with this higher conception the village folk of Bengal introduced some novel elements of popular origin into the character of Śiva. Such popular aspect of the character of Śiva can be best illustrated by a large number

56. *HB*, vol. I, p. 405.
57. Karmakar, A.P. *The Religions of India*, vol. I, pp. 79-91.
58 *JASB (NS)*, vol. XXIX, pp. 171ff.
59. *HB*, vol. I, p. 444.
60. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, p. 621.
61. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 447f.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 405-06.

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of folk songs known as Śivāyaṇa related to Śiva. The earliest reference to the songs mentioning Śiva as a cultivator of the fields is to be found in the *Śūnya-Purāṇa*[63] whose date has been assigned by Dr. D.C. Sen and N. Vasu in the 10th century[64].

We have already mentioned that one of the most important features of this period was the growth of the Tāntric cult and the influence of the same on all contemporary religious sects.

It has been said by Mm. H.P. Shastri that "the word Tantra is very loosely used. Ordinarily people understand by it any system other than the Vedas. The union of male and female energy is the evidence of Tantra".[65] But Winternitz is of the opinion that the term "Tantra ought to be restricted to the texts connected with Śakti worship".[66] Of course this is the main aspect of Tāntrism, which emphasizes prakṛti or the female principle. Other topics are also discussed in the Tantras, such as the creation myth, customs to be followed in society, royal duties, the curing of diseases and characteristic features of the male and female.[67] H. Kern writes "The development of Tāntrism is a feature that Buddhism and Hinduism in their later phases have in common step. The object of Hindu Tāntrism is the acquisition of wealth, mundane enjoyments, rewards for moral actions, deliverance by worshipping Durgā, the śakti of Śiva—Prajñā in the terminology of Mahāyāna by means of spells, muttered prayers, samādhi, offerings etc. Similarly the Buddhist Tantras purpose to teach the adepts how by a supernatural way to acquire desired objects, either of a material nature, such as the elixir of longevity, invulnerability, invisibility alchemy ; of a more spiritual character as the power of evoking a Buddha or of a Bodhisattva to solve a doubt or the power of achieving in this life the union with some divinity. There is an unmistakable affinity between Tāntrism on one side and the system of *Yoga Kammatthana* on the other".[68]

With regard to the priority of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantras and their antiquity great uncertainty still prevails. A group of scholars including N. Macnicol,[69] M.T. Kennedy[70] and Mm. H.P. Shastri[70] asserts the priority of the Buddhist Tantras, and for them "it was by the way of Buddhism that Tāntric practice gained a foothold in Hinduism". The view is strongly championed by S.K. Chatterjee who

63. Ramai Pundit, *Śunya Purāṇa*, ed. N. Vasu. pp. 107-14.
64. Sen, D.C. *HBLL*, p. 30 ; Vasu, *ASM*, p. Introduction CXL.
65. Vasu, N.N. *The Modern Buddhism and its followers in Orissa*, p. 10.
66. *IHO*, Calcutta, vol. IX, p. 4.
67. Paul, P.L. *op. cit.*, p. 76.
68. Kern, J.C.H. *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 133.
69. Macnicol, N. *Indian Theism*, p. 182.
70. Kennedy, M.T. *The Chaitanya Movement*, p. 3.
71. Vasu, *Modern Buddhism in Orissa*, p. Introduction, 27.

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observes : ". . . . in Tāntric Buddhism, the Tāntric symbolism and practices found another and a potent channel through which it (*sic*) could exert an indirect but nevertheless very effective influence on Purāṇic Brahmanism. Present-day Brāhmaṇism in Bengal may be characterised as more than three fourths Tāntric in its inspiration, outlook and ritual, and less than one-fourth Vedic, with a Purāṇic background : and the greatest legacy of Buddhism in Bengal, in its latest phase before it died out officially or formally, has been the Tāntric attitude and atmosphere".[72] But this view has been objected to by other scholars as such E.A. Payne,[73] Burnouf,[74] who are of the opinion that it was on the basis of Śaiva Tantras that the Buddhist Tantras grew up, by borrowing not only the language but also the rites and practices of the Śaivas. De la Vallee Poussin goes further to state that Buddhist Tāntrism may be called "practically Buddhist Hinduism, Hinduism or Śaivism in Buddhist garb".[75] In this respect S.B. Dasgupta's theory may be studied with profit. He boldly asserts that "Tāntricism with its heterogeneous nature is neither exclusively Hindu, nor exclusively Buddhist in origin".[76] It is also believed that both the Tantras drew their inspiration from one common source of very early origin under the same socio-religious background.[77] As they borrowed from one and the same stock there seems to have been no line of demarcation between the two Tantras. However, in many respects the Tāntric forms of both Hinduism and Buddhism are similar. Dasgupta further believes that the early Āgamic texts are the basis of later Tāntric texts. He supports his theory from the Tantrāloka of Abhinavagupta where the author openly admits as its basis the Āgamas which existed during the time of Somānanda and Utpala.[78]

As regards the antiquity of the Tantras C. Chakraborty points out that many rites and practices similar to those described in the Tantras were quite familiar to the primitive peoples of all countries.[79] Some scholars are of the opinion that the Āryans borrowed the primitive rites from the Dravidian or other un-Aryan peoples and through a gradual process of assimilation systematised them for their own purposes, with the addition of many later practices.[80] It has been suggested that Assam and Bengal were the birth places of Tāntrism in India and from there it spread all over India.[81]

72. *B.C. Law volume*, part I, p. 82.
73. Payne, E.A. *The Śāktas*, p. 73.
74. Burnouf, E. *Introduction a L'historie du Buddhisme Indien*, p. 492.
75. *ERE*, vol. XII, p. 193.
76. Dasgupta, S.B. *ORS*, p. 20.
77. Mitra, R.C. *op. cit.*, p. 71.
78. Dasgupta, S.B. *op. cit.*, p. 20.
79. *IHQ*, vol. VI, p. 117.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

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Smith points out that Kāmarūpa "is a gate through which successive hordes of immigrants from the great hive of the Mongolian race in Western China have poured into the plains of India, and many of the resident tribes are still almost pure Mongolians. The religion of such tribes is more than of local concern, because it supplies the clue to the strange Tāntric development of both Buddhism and Hinduism, which are so characteristic of mediaeval and modern Bengal".[82] This view is corroborated by the evidence of Tantras which point to the importation of Tārā worship from China to India.

It is believed by Prof. R. Shamasastry, that the Tāntric form of worship was prevalent in prehistoric India.[83] But C. Chakraborty maintains that Tāntrism originated chiefly from Vedic religion.[84] This view is supported by Rene Guenon, who is of the opinion that the doctrine of the Tantras is nothing but what is already contained in the Vedas and that "as for the means of realisation prescribed by the Tantras, by the same token they can be said to be directly derived from the Veda, for they are really only the application and the putting into practice of this doctrine.[85] The same view is championed by P.C. Bagchi[86] who asserts that the fundamental attitude of both Tāntric and Vedic religions is the same and that the Tāntric cult had its origin in the Vedic religion. This school of thought argues in favour of the Vedic origin of Tāntrism as some features of Tāntrism are clearly found in the Vedas. However, it is to be noted that references to many mystic rites and practices, which are similar or very close to Tāntric rites are also met with in Buddhist and Jaina canonical works.[87] From this we can well infer the heterogenous nature of Tāntrism. Thus it is not wise to assume that it originated solely from the Vedas or from any other single source. There may have been some similarity between certain Vedic rites and other rites found in the Tantras, but that does not mean that Tāntrism grew up from Vedic sources.

There is also a contradictory theory. It is suggested by N.N. Vasu[88] that the Tāntric or Śākta cult had a foreign origin as is evident from the verses in the *Kubjikāmatā Tantra* (*circa* 5th cent A.D.) and *Mahāchīnāchārasāra Tantra*. Evidence is not wanting to show that the cult of Tārā was imported from China, as we have a reference to the peculiar practice of using the twig of a tree in her worship, a custom unknown to the Indians. P.C. Bagchi[89] propounds the theory of

82. Quoted by Payne, *The Śāktas*, p. 69.
83. *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 35, 1906, pp. 274ff. ; *IHO*, vol. 6, p. 117.
84. *IHQ*, vol. 6, 1930, pp. 118-22.
85. *Indian Culture*, vol. 5. 1938-39, pp. 91-92.
86. Mitra, R.C. *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
87. *IHO*, vol. 6, pp. 122-25.
88. Vasu, N.N. *ASM*, pp. liii-liv.
89. Bagchi, P.C., *Studies in the Tantras*, pp. 45-55.

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foreign origin of Indian Tantras from different evidence. He divides the Tantras into two broad categories—orthodox and heterodox. The orthodox Tantras include the Āgamas, the Yāmalas and their supplements. The heterodox Tantras of Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical origin are the works of Tāntric schools such as Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna, Kulāchāra, Vāmāchāra etc. According to Prof. Bagchi it was into the heterodox Tantras that many of the mystical practices of foreign origin were absorbed. The theory of foreign origin in case of a few Tāntric goddesses such as Kubjikā and Tārā cannot be ignored. The influence of foreign elements especially from China on Indian Tantras has been noticed by Mm. H.P. Shastri, P.C. Bagchi and others.

In the present study the history of Tāntrism is very significant, in so far as the folk tales of Bengal, which seem to have originated between the 8th to 12th centuries, did not escape from Tāntric influences. Several examples are given by Dr. T.C. Dasgupta in his work on Bengali society.[90] Maynāmatī of the *Manik Chandra Rājār Gān* is said to have spent seven days and seven nights in the midst of fire without being burnt. In the Bengali *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* of Kṛittivāsa and Kāśīrām Dās respectively there are many references to the miraculous feats performed by the characters of the epics. In the former Rāvaṇa is referred to as cutting off his ten heads, one after another, to propitiate the goddess Durgā. The sorceries performed by the Tāntric sages are also to be remembered in this connection.

It is further observed by Dasgupta that "when Tāntricism took a deep root in the country it was believed that man was superior to gods. . . The idea of salvation through individual efforts was so much emphasised in Tāntricism that a man's power was considered almost unlimited, provided he could pass through austerities, prescribed in the different Tantras".[91] In the *Manasāmañgalkāvya* Chāndsadāgar the hero, continually challenges the superiority of the goddess Manasā. This aspect of the story is meant for glorification of man's power. And Chāndsadāgar had the power to challenge the goddess only because he was in possession of *mahājñāna* or supreme knowledge. This power, which he received from Śiva through extreme austerities, made him not only immortal but also unconquerable, like Maynāmatī of the story of Maynāmatī. Chāndsadāgar's final surrender to goddess Manasā seems to have been a later coinage, developed at a time when the influence of Tāntricism was losing ground in Bengali society. Śiva is said to have trembled in fear at the mention of Maynāmatī, on account of the Mahājñāna acquired by her by means of Tāntric practices. He is described as having said to the subjects of King Manikchandra, "Do not divulge my name to Maynāmatī, for if you do so, she will destroy my Kailasa".[92]

90. Dasgupta, T.C. *ABSOBL* pp. 154-55.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
92. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

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Similarly Manasā trembled in fear of Caṇḍī's supreme power.[93] It is believed that Tāntricism which seems abstruse now, was so widely current in the Bengali society that "it was more or less understood even by the illiterate country-folk in the 9th and 10th centuries".[94]

The Śākta cult can be traced to have existed in various forms in different parts of India from very early age. In one of its popular aspects Śakti is found worshipped as different Grāmadevatās. Marshall writes : "Her representatives are the Grāmadevatās, the village goddesses whose names are legion and whole local attributes may vary, but who one and all are personifications of the same power... There can be no question that they held a pre-eminent position among the national deities of the non-Aryan population. This is indicated alike by the popularity of their cult among the primitive tribes, and by the fact that the leading parts in their ritual and ceremonies are taken, not by Brāhmaṇs, but by low caste pariah members of some of the old tribes who are supposed to know how to win the ear of the goddess".[95] A Grāmadevatā is the "tutelary deity" or "protecting mother" of a particular locality, or in certain cases of particular caste. Such Grāmadevatās are believed to have a peculiar attraction for the village folk, as a natural protector deity or a mother. They are commonly worshipped on the outbreak of an epidemic or a natural calamity and on the occasions of marriage, child birth and so on. How they are worshipped is described in the *Grāmadevatā-Pratishṭhā* : "Vaishṇava people worship the goddess in the centre of the hamlet, Śāktas do so outside it, Kāpālikas on the burning ground, Gāṇapatas at the house-door or at the house-pillar, and other, with the exception of the merchants, revere her in the bazzar street. All, however, can adore her near a waterside, in a forest, or in a stone, wooden on clay temple".[96]

The linguistic and ethnological evidences indicate that the Bengali race had been formed of a mixture of four races—Dravidian, Kol, Mongolian and Aryan.[97] It is observed by some in this respect "that many of the characteristic Śākta practices and beliefs are traceable to the Dravidian and Mangolian people, and that they passed into Hinduism by a natural upward transition, as aboriginal, non-Aryan and casteless tribes adopted officially the religion of those immediately above them in the social scale".[98] There are literary evidence to show that the Śākta cult had become popular in

93. Deb, Narayana, *Padma-purāṇa*, ed. by T.C. Dasgupta, p. 63.
94. Dasgupta, T.C. *op. cit.*, p. 160.
95. Marshall, *M.I.C.*, vol. I, p. 51, ; Crooke, W. *Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, 1926, p. 47.
96. Oppert, G. *The Original Inhabitants of India*, p. 459.
97. *HB*, vol. I, p. 449.
98. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

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Bengal from the 6th and 7th centuries A.D.[99] On the other hand, it has been suggested that it was only from the Gupta period that Bengal came fully under the influence of Aryan civilization though the process of Aryanisation had continued for many centuries.

The Bengalis may be grouped into two broad groups. The first of them comprises primitive people such as the Kols, Śavaras, Hāḍis, Doms, Pulindas, Chaṇḍālas and others styled as Mlecchas ; and the second comprise of the higher class people of the prevalent caste groups.[100] On present day analogy, we may assume that there was always a great difference in all respects between these two groups living side by side. The first had very little to do with the superior deities of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, the deities who were generally worshipped by upper classes. The common people paid their respects to the Grāmadevatās of local origin. It is suggested by Dr. N.R. Ray[101] that in the early period of our history, Grāmadevatās of the pre-Aryan people were never worshipped by upper classes with the help of Brāhmaṇ priest, as Manu ordains that the Brāhmans who participated in the worship of such divinities had to live as outcastes from their community. But the upper classes could not wean the people away from their ardent ancestral attachment to those deities of popular origin. This argument is not, however, wholly conclusive, since Manu is not a product of Bengal and many centuries must have passed before the instructions of the text were accepted throughout India. Moreover to this day the Brāhmans often perform rites connected with village deities, and are not ostracised by their community for doing so. On the other hand prof. Ray[102] further adds that the *Maṅgalkāvyas* and other evidences indicate that many of the deities of un-Aryan origin such as Bana-Durgā, Śītalā, Ṣaṣṭhī, varieties of Caṇḍī the subject of our study, Jāṅgulī a forest deity etc. were incidentally absorbed into the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist pantheons. We have already noticed that Bengal had always been a fertile ground where large number of local deities of female variety had originated during the Pāla-Sena period. The old and mediaeval Bengali literature bear out this fact reflecting the struggle between the worshippers of local goddesses and the deities of Brāhmaṇical hierarchy.

Bengal however a stronghold of orthodox Brāhmaṇical Hinduism by the time when the Sena kings succeeded to gain control in the area. For a few centuries before that time Tāntric Buddhism side by side with Brāhmaṇical religion of a liberal type predominated. It is generally held that during the Pāla period local beliefs began to be mixed up with Mahāyāna Buddhism and out of this intermixture had

99. Puyne, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
100. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 557ff.
101. Ray, N.R. *op. cit.*, p. 579.
102. *Ibid.*

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emerged quite a number of local gods and goddesses.[103] Thus "the illiterate villagers of Bengal worshipped many gods and goddesses under the influence of Tāntric Buddhism, and the Hindu priests gradually took these up, and associating them with the deities of the Hindu pantheon as related in the Purāṇas. Hinduised the whole spiritual atmosphere of Bengal. They connected the fables current in the country with the śāstrik stories and thus bridged over a gap, created by the loss of Buddhist ascendency and its traditions in Bengal".[104] This observation of Prof. D.C. Sen is not wholly true when he speaks of the worship of deities by the village folk under the influence of Tāntric Buddhism alone. It seems more probable that the village folk worshipped deities of popular origin which had little or nothing to do with the higher conceptions of either Buddhist or Brāhmaṇical religion. Some Tāntric influences can be detected in the practices connected with the worship of these deities, but there are no sufficient grounds to think that these popular deities grew up under the influence of Tāntric Buddhism alone. Prof. Sen's argument has not been strengthened by examples or illustrations. It was under the Senas that orthodox Brāhmaṇism began to exert a great influence over the socio-religious life of the people. But the deep-rooted religious beliefs and practices which had arisen in the Pāla period or earlier could not be eradicated. Thus the current religion practiced widely by the common people underwent some change in accordance with the spirit of the age and the needs of society. Human mind is always found to be in favour of some sort of harmonious co-operation between the old and the new and "this contact of the popular faith with the new creed, that was being introduced, created a strange force, which is to be observed in growing literary activity all over the country—the literature of Purāṇic Renaissance, while showing an unmistakable rebirth of Sanskritic ideals, had a place reserved for popular creeds and also for the stories current in the country which the Brāhmaṇic school presented in a new and attractive garb".[105] This idea had its best expression in the old and mediaeval Bengali poetry written between *circa* A.D. 1300-1600, in praise of deities of local origin such as Dharma, Maṅgal Caṇḍī, Śītalā and others.

We have already said that one of the important characteristics of this period had been the process of assimilation in the cultural orbit of the people of the deities of different religious systems. The Buddhists borrowed Hindu deities such as Indra, Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī, Mahākāla, Nīlakaṇṭha and Vighnāntaka.[106] One of the forms of Avalokiteśvara with five heads very closely resembles Śiva as the five headed

103. Bhattacharya, A. *BMKI*, p. 2.
104. Sen, D.C. *HBLL*, p. 378.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
106. Bhattacharyya, B. *IBI*, Foreword, p. 1.

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Mahādeva.[107] A standing image of the same deity is found to bear close similarity to Viṣṇu images.[108] On the other hand the Hindus also borrowed Buddhist deities such as Cāmuṇḍā, Vāsulī, Tārā, Bhadrakālī and Mañjughoṣa.[109] Mahāyānā deities such as Amoghasiddhi, Akṣhobhya, Pāṇḍārā and Kurukullā are found eulogised in the orthodox Hindu Tantras.[110] It is further suggested that the Buddhist goddesses Jāṅgulī, Mahāchīnatārā, and Vajrayoginī were prototypes of those known in the Hindu pantheon as Manasā, Tārā and Chinnamastā respectively.[111] This process of assimilation strongly indicates the establishment of friendly relationship at a certain period between the people following the two religious sects. It has been observed by Prof. Ray[112] that though there may have been disagreement between the leaders of the two sects, a conscious attempt was made at co-operation, and that there seems to have been no quarrel among the laity. It was their efforts which helped the process of adjustment and unity among the followers of the two religious sects. Prof. Ray has tried to give support in favour of his views from a Buddhist stotra in the *Sādhanamālā*, addressed to Tārādevī, where Tārā, Umā, Padmāvātī and Vedamātā are conceived as one and the same. He further suggests that there was a tendency to make little or no distinction in rites and ceremonies or in the conception of images and in their worship between the Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical religions.[113]

We have given prolonged consideration to this topic, because careful study of the legends concerning Caṇḍī suggests that the goddess is of a complex nature which can be properly understood only against the background of the religious traditions prevalent in Bengal during the early phases of history.

THE TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT OF CAṆḌĪ MANGAL STORY

Recent ethnographic studies specially of the tribes of northern, western and middle India have left least doubt that some of the tribes have been Hinduized to such an extent that they have been assimilated among different castes at different levels in the Brāhmaṇical society.

A case of Hinduization of the Orāons in all its details may be taken. In the course of tribal studies, S.C. Ray traced how Orāons of Chotanagpur finding much similarity between their own beliefs and the Hindu religious beliefs adopted those in their own indigenous tradition. The principal feature of the earlier religion of the Orāons was a belief in the existence of the spirit of Good embodied in Dharmas, the

107. Getty, A. *GNB*, p. 56.
108. Mitra, R.C. *The decline of Buddhism*, p. 63.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
110. *Ibid.*
111. Bhattacharyya, B. *IBI*, Foreword, p. 1.
112. Ray, N.R. *BI* (Adi parva), p. 670.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 671.

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sun, God and creator on the one hand and of the forces of Evil manifested in the Evil-mouth (*Bai-Bhak*) on the other [113a]

Religion of the tribal groups of people may be found manifested in the belief in spirits of various kinds according to the following list :—

1. Protective Spirit
2. Benevolent Spirit
3. Evil or Malevolent Spirit
4. Ancestral Spirit

The goddess Caṇḍī has been held as belonging to the second class of spirit in the list, the spirit of hunting and war, and she is specially propitiated by young men. The major spirits of the tribals are benevolent. The tribals believe that they are present everywhere in the shape of either an animal or a tree or a stone or a stream or a mountain etc. They are represented by stones, bamboos, wooden poles, wooden frames, streams, planets, trees etc. and are worshipped regularly at the family and village level. Unless duly propitiated these spirits may change their role and bring in disease, death, failure of crops, accidents, calamities, etc. for the village or the family concerned.

As we have mentioned above, Caṇḍī has been a popular female deity in Bengal who is believed to bring success in hunting and war. This is the deity par excellence of unmarried young Orāons. She too, like Mahādeo, is represented by a roundish stone, which like the Mahādeo stone is believed to have issued out of the ground by itself. Since Caṇḍī is propitiated by the villagers for the purpose of gaining success in hunting and war, she may also be classed as a village deity.

Caṇḍī stone is sometimes used as a fetish which a huntsman may carry with him in a hunting expedition in order to gain success in the chase. In an Orāon village there may be, and generally are, more than one seat (*āsthān*) on some upland or hill-slope dedicated to Caṇḍī, and at each of these places she is represented by a stone. At some places there may be found a smaller stone by the side of a big Caṇḍī stone, and the Orāons of the village describe the smaller stone as the offspring of larger Caṇḍī stone—'the baby of the old woman'. Caṇḍī is the goddess held in reverence by bachelors and it is only the bachelors and not married men who can offer sacrifices to her.

The great annual sacrifice to her is celebrated on the fullmoon day in the month of Māgh. On eight days before that day all the Orāon villagers assemble at the village *ākhrā* and young bachelors go from house to house, bidding every family to prepare rice-beer for the occasion. On the next market-day a goat is purchased

113a. Roy. S.C., *Orāon Religion and Customs*, Ranchi, 1928, pp. 65.

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with money raised by subscription from the villagers. Early in the morning of the day of the full moon all the young bachelors assemble at the *ākhrā* or dancing ground which is usually situated by the side of their Dormitory. The village *Pāhan's* wife, early in the morning, cleans and besmears the spot with cowdung diluted in water. Each of the Caṇḍī *āsthanas* in the village wife have a Pahan of its own and as many unmarried youths will be elected Caṇḍī *Pāhans* for the purpose.

The *Pāhān* thus elected bathes and goes to the *Caṇḍī tāṇr* where the other boys have already collected fuelwood, cooking-pots and jars of rice-beer supplied by the villagers. The *Caṇḍī Pāhan* puts three marks of vermilion on the Caṇḍī stone and offers some *āruā* rice to Caṇḍī. The goat purchased on the preceding market-day is now fed with some *āruā* rice, and while it is eating the rice its head is cut off with a battle-axe by the boy priest. The meat of the head and trunk of the goat is dressed and cooked by the Dhumkuria boys then and there. Only the Orāon bachelors of the village make a merry feast, of this. All this feasting and drinking at the *Caṇḍī tāṇr* go on till sun-set or a little later, after which the bachelors go to the Dhumkuria carring their *jātrā*-flags and beating their drums. The rest of the villagers go back to their respective houses. The young men and girls dance and sing at the *ākhrā* till mid-night or even later.

GODS AND GODDESSES KNOWN IN THE SOCIETIES

The Bengali narrative poem known as the *Śūṇya Purāṇa* has given Islamic names to many Buddhistic and Hindu gods and goddesses. Ramāi Pundit's *Dharma-Pujā Paddhati* is likewise a work conceived in the mould of folk-Buddhism. In the *Dharmamaṅgala* of Ghaṇarām, Mānik Ganguly and others, attempts are made to evolve a rapproachment between folk-Hinduism and folk-Buddhism on a common Tāntric foundation. Among the other folk-deities prevalent in mediaeval Bengal mention may be made of Śītalā, the goddess of small pox, and Manasā the goddess of snakes. Many of these are directly or indirectly associated with Śiva and Kālī (Caṇḍī, Tārā, Ādyā) complex.

No matter what the name is and what the formal affiliation of these gods and goddesses to the Buddhist or Brāhmaṇical pantheons may be their sociological significance is self-evident. These deities were conceived, invented and created by the common people of the Mediaeval age in the belief that by propitiating such deities one could save oneself from enemies and override difficulties, both natural as well as human. In the second place, these are also invoked in order to promote health, wealth, success in life, and general prosperity. In Bengali folk-consciousness the gods and goddesses are but hand-maids to human welfare. They are instruments (*yantras*) by whose grace man could achieve of worldly success.

One type of gods and goddesses is held as embodiment of Śakti or energy. A second type of divinities was created by Bengali folk mind to furnish the masses with

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'Great-Exemplars' from whom might be learnt the duties and obligations of life, individual, domestic and social. It is through the narratives connected with these gods and goddesses that the people were given instructions regarding ideal relationship between parents and offsprings, husband and wife, ruler and subject and so on. The literature through which such gods and goddesses came to be held as ideals of morality has its chief forte in *bhakti*, the emotional element in human nature. This devotional or emotional poetry eulogising *Bhakti* appeals to love, faith and hope rather than to the intellectual and rational element in human nature. Kṛttivāsa's *Rāmāyaṇa* has furnished the Bengali people with an idea about positive morality through the stories of Rāma and his consort Sītā upholding of father's promise by Rāma, Lakshmana's reverence and attachment to the elder brother Rāma and such other facts. It is by this Bengali epic that the mind of the common folk was made conscious about the duties of man.

It may be said that the folk mind of Bengal has not cared much to inquire into the Sanskrit Vedas, Saṁhitās, Purāṇas, Tantras etc. in order to give shape to the legends revealed in the stories about gods and goddesses in these folk poems such as Kṛttivāsa's *Rāmāyaṇa*. Vidyāpati and Chaṇḍīdāsa's *Vaiṣṇava Padāvalī* verses and the Caṇḍi-songs of Mukundarām. In all these literary works there has been a steady increase in the number of gods and goddesses. In some cases gods known from classical traditions are found to have been cast in an entirely new shape. There has been no epoch of Bengali tradition without its own mythology, hagiology and anthology. It is not the environment or the society-cult of Durkheim that has dominated the Hindu life-systems. To use Lasbax's expression, Bengal has attempted through all its arts and cults to be the maker of its own character and internal renovation.[114] This is perfectly natural, because the Hindu is fundamentally an agnostic, i.e., has never believed in the possibility of human intelligence ever to unravel the mysterious eternal truths of the universe, or to understand, except perhaps negatively the nature and attributes of God ; and therefore he has ever felt to be at complete liberty to imagine and invent whatsoever God or Gods he chooses to adore. He has not feared to conceive the Divinity as He, She, It or They. He has worshipped his Deity as father, mother, brother, sister, lover, friend, and what not ; and he has endowed his creation or invention with any attributes he likes for the time being. He has borrowed his god-lore from the Mongols, he has taken his god-lore from the hill-tribes, he has imbibed his god-lore from the speechless message of sunshine and snows and he has evolved his god-lore out of his own head and heart. His monotheistic polytheism or heinotheism is based essentially on his agnosticism.

114. Lasbax. E. *La Cite Humaine*, vol. II (Paris), pp. 48-50, 1927.

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TRADITION OF TRADE AND COMMERCE : INTERNAL TRADE

From an early age till about the beginning of Muslim rule in Bengal the general usage of buying and selling of commodities was through a system of barter, though there was a medium of exchange in the shape of cowries and copper coins for smaller, and gold and silver coins for bigger transactions. The Bengalis had carried their system of barter even to foreign countries and this system of barter was commonly termed as '*Badal-Bānijya*'. In the later age when trade declined, the Hindu merchants became notorious for their dishonesty. The picture of Murārī Sīl in the *Caṇḍīkāvya* and that of the merchant mentioned in the story of *Śaṅkhamālā*[115] show that Hindu merchants in the declining days of their commercial activities had lost their traditional integrity.

In the 17th cent the common currency in Bengal was represented by cowries, *dāmdis* and the *dāms*, besides the *sikkās*. Though the ratio between *dāmdis* and *dāms* varied at different times still on the whole eight *dāmdis* were taken to be equivalent to one *dām*, and forty *dāms* were equal to one *sikkā* rupee. *Dāms* and *dāmdis* were copper coins.

It goes without saying that, the articles in the market were far cheaper in olden times. In the 15th cent the whole marriage ceremony of Sri Chaitanya Dev was performed with a few cowries and this was referred to as a magnificent instance of costly marriage by the poets who described it.[116] A century earlier, Kṛttivāsa, the celebrated poet of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was satisfied with a piece of *Pāter-Pāchrā* (a kind of coarse silk cloth) from the Lord of Gauḍa while a century later Kavikaṅkan spoke highly of *Jaggannāthī*, sheet which, we think, also was not cloth of a very fine quality. In the latter part of the 16th century the condition of trade was equally simple as may be gleaned from Mādhavāchāryya's *Caṇḍīkāvya*.

The people in general depended mostly on agriculture and thus if the produce was good, people lived a contented and happy life and if the crops were poor their miseries were indescribable. The caprices of the rulers sometimes ruined the people altogether. There is little doubt about the fact that when a ruler was good everything went on smoothly. An illustration from Kavikaṅkan's *Caṇḍī kāvya* will stand to prove this. The story also further describes occasional miseries suffered by the people due to failure of crops, relief meted out to such indigent subjects by a good king, the system of land-tenure, and the mutual rights and duties of a landlord and his tenants as had been prevalent in Bengal in the 15th century A.D. Kālaketu of the *Caṇḍīkavya* poem who had become a king had addressed the following to one Bulān Maṇḍal a common subject of his kingdom. It was just what a paternal despot would do :—

115. See the story of *Sakhamala* collected by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Mazumdar in *Thakurdadar Jhuli*, p. 221.

116. See *Chaitanya-Bhāgavat* (Adi khaṇḍa) by Vṛndāvan Dās fol. 95-96, C.U. MS no. 472.

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"O brother Bulān Moṇḍal, do reside in my city and I shall present you with pieces of *kuṇḍals* (ear rings) as a mark of favour. In agriculture seek your conscience first, and if it be hard for you to pay my rent yearly, do so after three years. I do allot one *taṅkā* (rupee) per plough and have my signature affixed in your document containing the lease. I won't seize your produce from the field, but shall wait till you pay me off in cowries at your convenience and shall not depute any tax-collector to realise taxes from you. If you really mean to remain in Gujrat, I won't demand anything in the shape of '*Selamis*', '*Bāṅsgāris*', '*Pārvanis*' and Panchaks and I won't also charge boat-tax, loom-tax and paddy-cutting tax or demand anything on the plea of mistakes in the account-books. However much you may sell your good paddy, I won't covet its share, nor shall I desire any increase of blind population in my city. I won't take any house-rent from those of you who are new settlers in my city, rather I shall help those amongst you who will pursue agriculture, with paddy, for sowing purposes. I shall verily be a servant of the Brāhmaṇas, fulfil everybody's, want and duly honour the honourable".[117]

The above description supplies a few words for exorbitant and illegal taxes that were exacted from poor subjects by oppressive and land-lords.

MARITIME TRADE

Bengal was once famous for her efficiency in the art of ship-building and the part played by the traders of Bengal engaged in maritime trade. Besides, there are such foreign works as '*Mahāvaṅśa*' of Ceylon wherein mention had been made of stupendous Bengal ships in which Prince Bijoy and his companions arrived in Ceylon in the 6th cent B.C. In the *Maṅgalkāvyas* we find animated description of the commercial and maritime activities of the Bengali people during the pre-Muslim period, although the poets dealing with those subjects belonged to a subsequent age.

In ancient Bengal ship-building reached a high degree of perfection and the sea-going vessels used to be actively engaged in promoting the prosperity of the country by conducting commercial intercourse with various places both within and outside India.

The wood required for the construction of ship was teak, gāmbhāri, tamāl, piāl, kāthāl etc. But it seems that the wood of the fabled tree *Manpaban* was best for the purpose. In the earliest times, the word Manpaban implied the extreme speed

117. *Caṇḍīkāvya* of Kavikaṅkan (Bhaṅgavāsi ed.), p. 84.

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of a vessel, compared with the flight of the mind and the wind, and we have a word in the *Mahābhārata* '*Manomārutagaminīm*,[118] to show this.

While building a sea going vessel, the first work to be done was holding of a ceremony known as '*Dārābāndhā*', or the thrusting of a gold nail (*sonār jal*) to the keel (*Dārā*) with the help of a silver hammer (Hātur). It was done by the owner himself. After this ceremony, the actual work of construction was to begin. First a measurement of the vessel was taken. Then the keel to be carefully constructed with which strong pieces of timber were joined with the help of iron nails. Next the '*Galui*' (prow) was to be built. This finished construction of the hold of a vessel. The deck, the *Pāṭātan* (pieces of timber joined to the keel) and the shed were constructed next. After these, the construction of helm and rudders, and decoration work made the building of a ship complete.[119] It may be noted that the prow took the appearance of a peacock or a *śuka* bird or some other fancy shape specified in the works on art and the vessels were accordingly knows as '*Mayūrapankhī*', '*Śukapaṅkhī*' etc. Mention of seven types of prows representing the shapes of a lion, a buffalo, a serpent, an elephant, a tiger and a bird is found in the old Sanskrit works on ship-building, such as *Yuktikalpataru* attributed to king Bhoja.[120] A vivid description of the construction of a vessel as found in Kavikaṅkan's *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya* is given below :

> "Seven '*diṅgās*' or vesse's were built by Biśvakarmā and his son Dārubrahmā with the assistance of Hanumān. The mighty Hero Hanumān began to saw the wood of various denominations, such, as tāl, śāl, kāṇṭhāl, piāl, gāmbhāri and tamāl. The architect Dārubrahmā in the meantime made the nails. They made beautiful vessels, each of which was a hundred yards in length and twenty yards in breadth. The prow of each vessel resembled the head of a Makara fish. It was made of ivory and the eye-balls were of precious gems. First, the ship Madhukara was constructed. In its central part there was the Raighar containing '*Rājāsan*'—the principal cabin for the merchant. A nook was

118. *Tatah prabāsito bidvān bidurena narastadā/*
pārthānaṁ darśayāmāsa manomārutagāminīṁ//
sarvayātasahām nāvaṁ yantrayuktāṁ patākiniṁ/
śive bhāgirathitira naraibripramsivih kritāṁ//

119. For the construction of vessels see also *MBh*, Adiparva. Caṇḍīdāsa's *Śrikriṣṇa kirtan* published by Vangīya Sahitya Parisad, p. 140.

120. See also Viśvakoṣa, vol. X, p. 461. In ancient Europe also the prows of the vessels represented various models. See the figure of the old Attic ship in the Dipylon Vase (British Museum) and Roman galleys in Trajan's column Rostrate. See the pictorial representation of the landing of Vijoya in Ceylon in Ajantā cave paintings. (R.K. Mukherjee, *History of Indian Shipping*, p. 44) The sculptures from Sānchī stūpa. The Chinese Junk (Commercial Museum, Philadelphia) as told by Marco Polo (*Periplus of the Erythean Sea*, p. 247).

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reserved for the helmsman and the back part as the strong room for keeping treasures. There was also a mast on the vessel. The Daṇḍa-kerwāl or oars were made of jack and teak wood and a helm was fitted to the praw of each vessel. The seven vessels were named :

1. Madhukara (the Bee)—The flagship.
2. Guārekhī (Its prow resembled the head of a lion)
3. Raṇajayā (the victory)[121]
4. Raṇabhīma (the terrible in war)
5. Mahākāyā (the Titanic)[122]
6. Sarvadharā (the all container)
7. Nāṭśālā (the Amusement Hall)[123]

In the description given above we find different names of a ship built in those days. Exaggerated descriptions are, however, apparent in the writings of Bijoy Gupta and some of the poets of the latter day, when this art was practically abandoned in Bengal. But though there is much of legends in the stories, the old traditions were not altogether lost sight of. Ships of considerable tonnage for commercial purposes were surely still being constructed. In Kavikaṅkan's *Caṇḍīkāvya*, we find mention that if 100 carpenters worked for a whole year, only one vessel could be constructed.[124] The descriptions of voyages often go to show that ships of very large size used to be constructed in Bengal even if sufficient allowances are made for poetic imagination. In the *Mahāvaṁśa* we come across the following : "Prince Vijoy and his followers were sent away by king Siṁhavāhu of Bengal which was so large as to accommodate full 700 passengers". According to this work the ship in which Bijoy's Pāṇḍyan bride was brought over to Ceylon was of a very large size, having the capacity of accommodating 18 officers of state 75 menial servants and a number of slaves besides the princess herself and seven hundred other virgins who accompanied her.[125]

121. Cf. Nelsons Flagships 'the victory' in the battle of Trafalgar.
122. Cf. the famous ship Tiṭānic of the White Star line co.
123. Inspite of exaggerated descriptions of our poets, these vessels containing amusement hall, as in *Nāṭaśālā* and containing everything as in the 'All container of the list of Kavikaṅkan as also *Ajayśelapāt* and *Pakṣirāj* of the list of Vijoy Gupta, may be compared with the present ships of the other civilized countries of the world.
124. Baṅśīdās—*Manasāmaṅgal*, p. 285 (1,600 carpenters cut the branches of the *Manapaban* tree and piled them up in rows), also 282 (By the command of the king the Chief Engineer Gribar and the Admiral Gopal started with 1600 carpenters).
125. Mukherjee, R.K *A History of the Shipping and Maritime Activity*, pp. 157-62.
Acharya, R. *Bangalir Bal*, p. 22 : *The Indian Antiquary*, vol. XX, pp. 44-45 (3 copper plate grants from East Bengal); *JRAS*, 1895, p. 525.

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The following descriptions from the *Caṇḍīkāvya* is given below[126] :

"First was recovered from water the ship Madhukara. Its drawing-room was made of pure gold. Then came the turn of *Durgābar*. It is full of *Gābars* or sailors. Then came to sight the ship *Guārekhī*. Her mast (*Mālumwood*) might be seen from a distance of six miles. Another ship which rose up was *Śaṅkha-chūḍā*. Her breadth was eighty yards. Another ship named Chandrapāl was now recovered from the depth of water, when sailing, her sides touched both the banks of the river. The seventh and the last vessel was Chhotimati which carried rice."

From the descriptions that one comes across in the works of our poets it appears that the merchandise carried in Bengali vessels was mainly intended for export to Pāṭan and Siṅghal. A system of barter war generally restored to and fraud[127] played by the Bengali Merchants on foreigners of questionable civilization furnished a stock of humour and fun to our poets, on which all of them wrote in the same strain. We find occasional mention of merchandise, wherein the prices are sometimes ludicrously exaggerated, for during the time when these works were written, sea-voyage was reduced to a vague tradition in which fact and fiction were hopelessly blended together. Still we give below one list which may be found interesting as the objects mentioned were actually exported by way of trade in lieu of other objects received in exchange[128]:

Items of Bengali Merchandise		*Articles of foreign country*
1. Deer	In exchange of	Horse
2. Biraṅga	,,	Clove
3. Śuṇṭha	,,	Tanka-a kind of wood apple
4. Ape	,,	Elephant
5. Pigeon	,,	Śuā (Parrot)
6. Fruits	,,	'Jāyfal'
7. Bahara	,,	Betel-Nut
8. Jute	,,	White Chowrie (Chāmar)
9. Glass	,,	Emerald
10. Sea-salt	,,	Rock-salt
11. Dhoti (cloth)	,,	Pots

126. Mukundaram, *Caṅḍīkāvya*, p. 191.
127. *Caṅḍīkāvya* of Mukundarām (the character of Murarisila) and the story of Śaṅkhamāla by D.R. Majumdar.
128. *Caṅḍīkāvya* of Mukundarām, p. 191. Dhanapati's exchange of merchandise in Ceylon. The exchange of commodities seems to be somewhat more reasonable then that to be found in Baṅśīdās.

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12. Oyster-Shell	,,	Pearl
13. Haritāl	,,	Diamond
14. Joāni	,,	Jirā
15. Chuā	,,	Sandal-paste
16. Sheep	,,	Horse

It is to be noted that there was a time when glass used to be exported from India. We learn the following in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* :—

"The origin of the glass industry in India is uncertain. According to Mitra, it was made in Ceylon in the 3rd cent B.C. and Pliny (XXXVI, 66) refers to the glass of India as superior to all others, because made of pounded Crystal Mirrors, with a foil of lease and tin, were largely used at the time of the Periplus, and Pliny indicates (XXXVII, 20) that 'the people of India, by colouring crystal, have found a method of imitating various precious stones, beryls in particular. An early play, 'the *Mṛcchhakaṭika*' describes a scene in a court of justice to this effect.[129]

The Bengali merchants usually carried on trade with Ceylon and Patan in Gujrat and visited the following ports :—

1. Purī
2. Kaliṅga or Kaliṅgapatam
3. Chilkachuli or Chicacole in Madras coast
4. Bānpur
5. Setubandha Rameśvar
6. City of Laṅkā (in Ceylon)
7. Nilaccā or Laccadives
8. Patan (in Gujrat).

One of the chief places outside mainland of India visited by the Bengali Merchants was the Laccadives. Mention is found also of Pralamba Nākut, Aheelaṅkā, Chandrasalya island and Ābartana island which cannot be identified but which undoubtedly lay outside this country. A vivid description of the coasting voyage of the Bengali vessels from Saptagrām (an inland port of Bengal near Hooghly) to patan in Gujrat by doubling the Cape Comorin, is found in the *Manasāmaṅgal* poems of Baṅśidās. In the *Caṇḍīkāvya* of Kavikaṅkan we find accounts of mercantile adventurers of Bengal related in glowing terms. The lists of ports both Indian and foreign, and the conditions of sea-voyage tally in both these works. Here is an account of the voyages of the Bengalis as found in *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya*.[130]

129. Mitra, R.L. *Antiquities of Orissa*, vol. I, p. 100.; *Mṛcchhakaṭika*, Translation by A.W. Ryder, Cambridge, 1905.
130. *Caṇḍikāvya* of Mukundaram, Bangavāsi edition, pp. 195-202.

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"After the performance of the usual ceremonies before sailing, the merchant Dhanapati passed the following places : Bhowsiṅgher hāt, Matiārsafar, Chaṇḍī-gāchhā, Bolānpur, Purathan, Nabadvīp, Mirzāpur, Āmbua, Śāntipur, Guptipārā, Ulā, Khismā, Maheśpur, Fuliā and Hālishar—all by the side of Ganges. Then he reached the very celebrated inland port of Bengal known as Saptagrām near the Tribeṇī". The poet here incidentally praised this port and gave it a superior place among the following ports and places (some of which are Indian and some foreign) known to the poet. They are the ports of "Kaliṅga Trailaṅga, Aṅga, Vaṅga, Karaṇāṭa, Mahendra, Magadha, Mahārāṣṭra, Giyrāt Varendra, Vindhya, Piṅgal, Utkal, Drāviḍa, Rāḍha, Vijaynagar, Mathurā, Dwārakā, Kāśī, Kankhal, Kekaya, Purabak, Anayuk, Godāvari Gayā, Sylhet, Kāmrup, Koch, Hangar, Trihaṭṭa, Manikā, Faṭikā, Laṅkā, Pralamba, Nākuṭṭa, Bāgar Malay (Indian), Kurukshetra, Baṭeśwarī, Ahilaṅkā, Sibaṭṭa, Mahānaṭṭa and Hastinā etc." According to the poet the merchants of the above places visit Saptagrām but the merchants of the Saptagrām do never visit those ports and places (which proves the exaggerated notion of the poet about Saptagrām).

"At Saptagrām the merchant took on board sufficient quantity of drinking water for his voyage ; he then passed some other places of note by the river banks such as Nimāitīrtha, Betarah, Bagan, Kalighāt, Omulinga, Chhatrabhoga, Kālipur, Hemai, Hetāgarh, Saṅketamādhaba, Madanmalla, Bīrkhānā, Kālīhātī and Dhuligrām. On his way he encountered storm on the river Magrā. It took the merchant twenty days to reach the canal of Aṅgārpur. Then his vessels entered the sea adjoining the country of the Drāviḍas. The first place of note was Purī, celebrated for the temple Jagannāth. Then the merchant visited Chilkāchuli or Chicācole. Next the ports of note were Bāliaghāṭā and Bānpur which were soon left behind. They then reached the land of the Firinghees. They stealthily passed this place under cover of darkness at night as they were afraid of these people who were very strong in their fleet of warships which were known as the Hārmādā. Dhanapati then passed some seas which were infested with crabs, snakes and crocodiles etc., like Chānd. After much difficulty he reached Laṅkā. Before reaching Laṅkā, however, Dhanapati's vessels touched Setubandha-Rāmeśvar and crossed Kālidaha or Black-watered sea".

Agriculture and animal husbandry

In respect of agriculture, the Bengali peasants attained a high degree of perfection at a very remote period of history. The sayings of Dāk and Khanā—especially the latter, furnish a store-house of agriculture wisdom—the heritage of the Bengal peasantry from a far remote age. There is no doubt that the cultivators committed to memory most of these aphorisms and followed the principles contained in them

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in their agricultural operations with the utmost precision. It is a peculiar feature that astrology formed an important element in these aphorisms and the technicalities employed in them must have been highly useful to the peasant folk from the practical point of view. It may safely be said that the cultivators could appreciate essential principles of the science of astrology, disseminated amongst the masses, by means of couplets which could be easily understood. The weather forecast in the aphorisms of Khanā is so definite that the cultivators followed it with great advantage. Specially interesting are the agricultural superstitions (in respect of sowing seeds and plucking fruits) by which our illiterate peasants were guided. In spite of much that can be said against superstitions in general, we must admit that some of them were really beneficial to agriculture as they are evidently the outcome of agricultural wisdom, based on practical experience of the cultivators from an early age.

We know that agriculture has always been the principal occupation of the people in Bengal. The old Bengali literature, besides giving details of cultivation, contains many adages which embody the agricultural wisdom of the people. Thus we find such expressions[131] as "Cultivation should be personally done by the owner of the soil. He should himself plough the land being aided by his son. In case the son being not available for the purpose, the brother should step into his place. No third person should be relied on in the matter". Again, "In agriculture he who works himself is sure to get much profit while he who simply does the work of supervision gets only half the profit. But he who is lazy enough to stay at home and enquire about his cultivation from there as a third person is sure to lose in the concern". This caution shows that the peasantry of Bengal had no idea of organised labour. '*Dheṅki*' or the rice-husking pedal was once considered as an indispensable implement, for domestic purposes. The house which did not contain a '*dheṅki*' was considered as forsaken by good-luck.[132]

The *Caṇḍīkāvya* of Kavikaṅkan Mukundarām states that the poet, though a Brāhmaṇ by caste, earned his living by personally doing the work of a cultivator[133]. In the Sanskrit work called *Parāśara Saṁhitā*, a high place is found to have been given to agriculture. In this book advice has been given even to the *Brāhmaṇas* to

131. *Bāp beṭār Chāṣ chāi/Tā avābe sodar bhāi//*
Khāṭe khāṭāi lāver gāṭhi/Tār ardhek kāṅdhe chāṭi//
Ghare base puche bāt/Tār ghare hā-bhāt//
—Khanār Bachan.

132. *Yāhār ghare nāhi dheṅki musal/*
Se bahujhir nāhika kuśal// —Dāker Bachan.

133. *Śahar selimābāj tāhāte sajjana rāj nibase niyugi Gopināth/*
Tāhār tāluke basi dāminyāya chās chaṣi hibās puruṣa chay sāt// —*Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya*
(In the town of Selimābāj lives the good man Gopinath Niyogi. I live in his Tāluq and my village is Dāminyā, we are here for six or seven generations and our profession is agriculture.)

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carry on the duties of a cultivator with zeal. "With the paddy cultivated by himself or acquired from a field cultivated on his behalf he should offer the five sacrifices (enjoined in the works on *Smṛti*) and should likewise be engaged in celebrating the sacrificial rites such as the Vedas prescribe (the five sacrifices are mentioned by Manu, Ch. III, stanza- 0)[134].

Milk is held as one of the most important ingredients of food in India. Among the arts in which accomplished persons are enjoined to acquire proficiency two techniques are found to have been connected with this, viz, milking and churning. Similarly, clarified butter known as ghee is also mentioned in the *Śukranīti* as an article of great economic importance. One of the important issues with which the state in India would tend to interfere with respect to industry and commerce was to prevent adulteration in food-stuffs.

In addition to the above two techniques dealing with animals there had been three more connected with animal's life in the list of sixty-four arts viz.

(1) Softening of leathers
(2) Flaying of skins from the bodies of beasts
(3) Extraction of oil from animal flesh (fat)

Flesh or meat as a diet is known to the author of the *Śukranīti* but like fishing, meat-eating was held as a purely local custom confined, as it was, to the artisans and the artist classes of Bengal. Worms and insects as destroyers of grains were also taken note of by the *Śukranītisāra*. These texts advised the kings not to accumulate for future use grains that have been thus attacked by pests. Among the presents brought by kings and princes from various parts of India to king Yudhiṣṭhira, referred to in the *Sabhāparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, mention is made of animal skins of various kinds. The skins of animals that lie in holes, and of wild cats, i.e. the fur of varieties of martin and wealsel families, were brought by the Kāmbojas from Hindukush region ; blankets by the Ābhiras of Gujrat ; clothes of the wool of sheep and goats or thread spun by worms (silks) by the Scythians, Tukharas ; elephants were brought by princes of the Eastern tribes. It may also be added that animal products, e.g. the hair of yak, gour, gayal and other bovine animals living in hills were used in the manufacture of fly whisks or Chāmaras, described in the *Yuktikalputaru* as one of the most important insignia of royalty.

The dog, now held as an extremely unclean animal by the orthodox Hindus

134. Institutes of *Parāśara*—translated into English by K K. Bhattacharyya, second chapter Bibliotheca Indica)
Svayaṁkriste tathā kṣetre dhānyaiścha svayamārjitoh|
Nirbapet pancha yajnāścha kratu dikṣāchancha kārayet||
Parāśara Samhitā. 6/2).
Satkarmasahito biprah kṛṣikarma cha kārayet|
(PS 2/2)

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was considered a great pet during the period of the *Maṅgal kāvyas*. The songs of king Mānikchandra holds that when Rājā Govindachandra left his palace to become an ascetic his numerous pets including birds, cows, elephants and dogs were so much grieved that they started wailing for him. His favourite dogs which numbered no less than a hundred and eighty[135], threw themselves at his feet, as if much moved over his imminent departure : Dogs in those days were also employed for keeping watch over dwelling houses. Hāḍi Siddhā, the preceptor (*Guru*) of Govindachandra, had in his keeping a pair of ferocious dogs in order to prevent the Raja to go round for alms, and thus wanted to test the steadfastness and devotion of Govindachandra to his asceticism. These dogs of the Guru were known as '*Hāpān* and *Jhāpān*'[136]. The fighting sheep were perhaps much valued in old days. These animals were trained to perform acts of fighting in order to provide amusement to the people even from before the time of the *Maṅgalkāvyas*.[137]

Foundation of New Township and New Habitation

The establishment of a town by Kālaketu who belonged to the lowly and untouchable *vyādha* or hunter class as mentioned in the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya* may be held to bear considerable significance. The occasion furnishes the poet with an opportunity of giving an interesting cross section of the diverse races and classes of population and the occupational structure of these people such as the Brāhmaṇas the Kāyasthas, the milkmen etc. It also gives an idea about the layout of different parts of a town. The author also takes note of manners and customs, marriage and other social institutions that are found to have been described in detail[138]. The poet gives an account of the migration of the Muslims from Kaliṅga, who were the first among those to come and settle in the new township.

"Leaving the city of Kaliṅga, the ryots of all castes settled in the city of the *Bīr* (the hunter of the story) with their household gods. Accepting the *pān* (betel) of the *Bīr*, in token of their consent to the agreement, the Muslims settled there, the

135. *Nao buri kuttā kānde charanata pariyā* —*Mānikchandra Rājār gān.*
136. *Hāpān Jhāpān hilāl kukur* —*Mānikchandra Rājār gān.*
(The various orders of ascetics of ancient Bengal used to carry sticks or staffs with them for fear of dogs kept by the villagers—See *Jaina Ayārāṅga sutta*. *Mahābhārata* tells us that the Pāṇḍavas were preceded by a dog (or the god Dharma in disguise) during their final journey to heaven.
137. *Rājyet nila sādhu jujhāriyā bherā*/
Pārvatya tāngān taji laila dui ghorā//
Kavilaṅkan Caṇḍī, Vaṅgavāsi edition, p. 132.
(For presentation to the king, the merchant took with him a fighting sheep and two horses of Hilly or Tāngan and Arab or Tāji type).
138. Dasgupta, J.N. *Bengal in the 16th century A.D.*, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 57-95.

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western end of the town being assigned to them as their abode. There came the Mughals, Pathans, Kazis mounted on horses and the *Bīr* gave them rent free lands for their houses. At the extreme western end of their settlement they made their Hoseinbāṭı (place of Mohurrum Tazia), and they congregated all about the place. They rise very early in the morning, and spreading a red *pāṭṭy* (mat) they make their *namājes* five times during the day. Counting the Sulaimāni beads, they meditate on Pir Paigumbar. Each of them contributes to the decoration of the Mokām (Hosein's house). Ten or twenty sit together and decide cases, always referring to the Korān, while others sitting in the market-place distribute the Pīr Shirni (a paste of flour and sugar offered to the Pīr), beat the drum and raised the flag. They are very wise according to their own estimation ; they never yield to any one, and they never give up the roza (fast) as long as they have life in them.

Their appearance is rather formidable They have no hair on the head but they allow their beards to grow down to their chest. They always adhere to their own ways. They wear on their head a *ṭopi* (cap) which has ten sides, and what they call an *ijār* (*paiṭāmā*) tied tightly round the waist. If they meet one who is bare-headed, they pass him by without uttering a word, but going aside, they throw clods of earth at him. Many such Muslims known as mians with their followers had settled there ; they do not use water but wipe their hands on their clothes after taking their food. All four classes of Pāṭhāns had also settled there. Some contract *nikās* and others marry. Muslim priests known as Mollās who perform the marriage called *nikā* get a *sikkā* as remuneration and he blesses the pair by reading the *Kalmā*. With a sharp knife they (the Mollas) kill the fowl and get then *gaṇḍās* or cowries (less than ⅓ of a copper pice) for doing this job. For slautering a she-goat (*bakri*) the Mollāh gets six buries of cowries (about a copper pice) as also the head of the animal killed. Schools known as Moktabs were also set up where young Mahomedans were taught by pious Maulavīs.

Bāramāsyā or Poems about the life of the Common man over the twelve months of the year

Under the title of Bārā-māsyā or 'Ode of twelve months', an extensive literature had grown up in Bengal during the late mediaeval age. Such poems were generally incorporated as a section in larger works, known as *Maṅgala Kāvyas*. In the *Caṇḍī Maṅgala* written by Mādhab a poet from East Bengal, available in manuscript, one comes across a narrative of the joys and sorrows experienced by the people through the twelve months of the year. Such calendars of human experiences constituted a very popular and common theme for creative poetry written by the Bengali poets. The accounts of human experience detailed in these poems are not accounts of epulence and happiness. The hunter-girl Phullarā, for instance in the Kavikaṅkan-

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Caṇḍī[139] describes her own *Bāramāsyā*, which is nothing but a tale of woe and suffering. Perhaps after the *Rāmāyaṇa* written by Krittivāsa (*c.* 1450) no Bengali poetical work had been more popular than the Kavikaṅkaṇa-Caṇḍī written by Mukundarām (*circa* 1589). This work has the appearance of a treatise on Caṇḍī the Mother, held as a deity weilding supreme power and as such can be held as a piece of religious poetry. But one has only to go through the work, now available in print, and one would be convinced that no literary work in any language could be more religious and at the same time worldly than this Bengal composition written as it was with the object of propagating the cult of Kālī. Every line in this poem reveals the spirit of living human beings, expressed in their daily exploits and ambitions, their hatred and quarrels, their joys and sorrows. Mukundarām is the poet par excellence of man's concern with all sorts of material elements upon this Earth. He was a prophet born to sing the 'Everlasting *Yea*' (glory) to life. It is of life and the world that he sings, of men and women in action and in struggle. He has furnished the Bengali masses with unbounded store of strength, of *Śaktiyoga* (energism), pure and undefiled.

The movements and activities in which Mukundarām is interested in his poem on Caṇḍī are not all confined to the rustic home and the humble village that he knew of. He knew also of a larger world of the cities with the merchants, law courts, battles, pilgrimages, boat life, social intrigues and what not. Nay, a considerable part of this poetry provides information about foreign lands, trade with distant countries—Ceylon, for instance, and the exchange of goods. The result of all this 'world-sense', of strong interaction of events and movements is quite worthy of notice. The merchant Dhanapati has been portrayed as a man of wide and diverse experience. While his wife Khullanā's character is being publicly impeached in his own gild, he knows how to hold his head high. He is realistic enough to remember the stories of the *Mahābhārata* in which the morals such as can be questioned by the conventional standard have even been glorified. Nay, he himself tries to dissuade Khullanā from the determination to submit to the fire-test, well known from the story of Sītā told in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

On another occasion the merchant's wife Khullanā is found as being assisted by her maid Durvalā in the kitchen. The description of cooking points to the diverse items of household core which can be found in Bengal even to-day. One finds here among items used for preparation of food in Bengali kitchen such things as the jack-fruit seeds, pulse-cakes etc. so characteristic of dietary in Bengal.

139. Mukundarām, *Caṇḍikāvya*—Baṅgavāsi ed., pp. 199-202.

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Tārā and Maṅgal Caṇḍī

The introduction of the goddess Tārā into Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon probably dates from about the 6th cent A.D., when Buddhism began to grow inclined towards Tāntric persuits. Hiuen Tsang during the first half of the 7th cent A.D., incidentally refers to the image Tārā being worshipped at a few Buddhist shrines in India.[140] The worship of Tārā must have thereafter developed rapidly in India as inscribed images of Tārā, dating from the 8th to the 12th centuries A.D., have been found from numerous old Buddhist sites throughout India.

The conception of Tārā as a comprehensive embodiment of the female principle held as a divinity could have evolved from the Brāhmaṇical myth of Lakṣmī, to whom Tārā bears many resemblances in form and attributes. Lakṣmī like Tārā was also water-born (from the forth of the ocean), and she appeared bearing a lotus in her hand. Lakṣmī, like certain forms of Tārā, has the snake as attribute, apparently on account of her watery origin and association with wealth. But the parallel concept of Lakṣmī in Buddhism was that of Vasudhārā.

Tārayisyāmyaham nātha nānābhayamahārnavāt |
tena Tāreti māṁ loke gāyanti munipuṅgavāḥ ||

"The eminent sages in the world call me Tārā because O Lord, I take (my worshippers) across the ocean of various dangers". The Buddhist goddess Tārā thus explains the significance of her name. Indeed, this is also the etymological meaning of the name Tārā. Derived from the root *tār* (*tṛ+ṇic*), Tārā is the goddess who makes others, i.e. the devotees to cross the sea of trouble, or broadly speaking, the very ocean of existence. Tārā came out of an extensive lake and was thought of, as seated on a lotus emerging from water. She controls floods and enables her votaries to cross those safely. She is *Tāriṇī* the personification of power that takes the devotees across waters. Verily it is she on whose mercy success in sailing will depend. By her very nature she becomes the goddess of navigation. Originally she was invoked for safe swimming and for taking small vessels or boats across lakes in the regions where her worship arose. In course of time, however, she had grown to be worshipped for safe and successful navigation in the sea.

In the numerous varieties of Tārā images can be found concrete and objective representations of the wide varieties of names by which the goddess was known such as Sitatārā, Ugratārā, Ratnatārā, Bhṛikuṭitārā, Viśvatārā, Pushpatārā, Dīpatārā, Dhūpatārā, Sragdhatārā, Lochanā etc. Some of her names are identical with those of the Jaina Yakshiṇīs assigned to the several Tīrthaṅkaras in the Tāntric Jaina cult. This

140. Beal, S. *Si-yu-ki*, 11.103, 174. *Buddhist Records of the Western World.*

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association bears some analogy to the Buddhist cult as well.[141] Her names had grown in number reaching the mystic figure 108.

The goddess Tārā as her name would indicate, stand as the saviour or deliverer who carries her votaries across turmoils and troubles. The names by which she is chiefly known in Tibet, China, Korea or Japan all emphasise this aspect of the deity. It is true that the chief function of every deity, in whatever mythology we see, is to deliver the votary from distress. Tārā is the deity who safely carries the worshippers across the turmoils of the world compared to tempestuous oceans. Some of the texts quoted earlier are quite clear on this point, for instance, the Laghustuti which expressly says that she is to be invoked before venturing to cross expanses covered by water. The deity connected with swimming or crossing of waters can easily be taken as one who controls navigation. The description of Tārā or Kurukullā given in the *Lalitopākhyāna* or the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* indisputably proves that she has been held as the goddess of navigation. She is the *Naukeśvarī* the mistress of boats, has oars of jewels and occupies the boat of jewels. It is she who is capable of suppressing floods '*Jalaidhasamanaksamā*' and has countless boat-women under her command, who move about upon hundreds of boats, evidently to watch and save people in distress. The latter are the śaktis of boating or navigation with whom Tārā looks resplendent: *Tārā taraṇīśaktināṁ samabayotisundaraḥ*'. Their colour is the colour of the Ocean and apparently they are the personification of Oceanic waves which Tārā is supposed to control. Verily she is the goddess whose aid an adventurer will seek for when he goes out in search of wealth to distant lands launching his boats in order to cross the wide and deep seas.[142] It is true that the tantras do not call her a goddess of navigation nor do they connect her with navigation, but her *dhyāna* describing her as seated on the white lotus rising above the all-pervading waters goes to favour her as the guardian of vast stretches of water. In the tantras she is at times invoked for gaining control over speech or knowledge and her aid is sought for feats of learning. In fine, people will worship her for 'quick' success. This is due to her name Tārā being connected with the word *tvarā*, meaning haste, as would appear from the mantras found inscribed on the back of one of the images of Tārā, excavated at Nālandā: *Oṁ Tāre tuttāre ture svāhā*'. In the Buddhist works we do not have any clear statement connecting Tārā with water or navigation. The Buddhist goddess Kurukullā, too, is different from the goddess of that name who figures in the *Lalitopākhyāna* as a sea-goddess. But proofs are not wanting to show that even the Buddhists sought her aid for overcoming the distress caused by waters or oceanic storms. There are quite a few evidences, both epigraphical as well as sculptural which can be sited in favour of

141. For detail list of Jaina Yakshiṇīs, see Burgess, Lists from the *Ratnasāra*.
142. The *Toḍalatantra* (chapter IV) will also favour this view. *Toḍalatantra* quoted in the *Tārātantra* (*Gauḍagranthamālā* text)

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this view. For instance, mention may be made of an inscription of the reign of the Chālukya king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramāditya VI belonging to the śaka year 1017 (A.D. 1096). This inscription is incised on a stone tablet which bears an unmistakable representation of the figure of Tārā.[143] Burgess remarked that she was no doubt addressed as delivering her votaries from the very eight forms of dangers or apprehensions (*aṣṭamahābhayas*) from which Avalokiteśvara[144] is held as the saviour.

But Tārā is not exclusively the goddess of navigation because the Tibetan form of the deity indicates that she helped people in crossing the difficulties of all kinds. Of course the name Tārā may mean 'the saviour of people from difficulties'. It is not unreasonable to think that the stars (Sanskrit Tārā) guided traders on the seas and in the forests, so that the conception of Tārā may have originated from star cult. To sum up we can say that the goddess Tārā probably had a Buddhist origin and possibly was first thought of in Indian Tibet when she was introduced into India via Nepal.[145] Her worship seems to have spread through the Gauḍa country to other parts of India and to distant lands. Originally she seems to have been the goddess who was invoked for safe crossing of waters and who saved her worshippers from the calamities caused by floods. As such, she came to be worshipped as the goddess of navigation and finally became the deliverer from the ocean of existence. Her worship began probably about the 5th cent A.D. and she became very popular in the early mediaeval period, i.e. about the 7th century when her worship was introduced into the Hindu pantheon. In Hindu tradition, originally she was only a minor divinity but subsequently she became one of the principal deities who was worshipped as the second Mahāvidyā and the deliverer or saviour from the troubles of the world, unrivalled in the quick granting of boons.

Śaktī worship or the cult of adoring the female or the mother principle is a major cult of the Rāḍha region. In the absence of a clear-cut religious demarcation it is difficult to say whether the śakti-cult or the Vaiṣṇava Bhakti cult attracts a larger follower. The central theme of the śakti cult had been the worship of the female principles associated with a male principle. Female divinities having a male consort endowed with Creative powers are generally, conceived as śakti. In Brahmanical Hindu religion Śakti is conceived as the divine mother and the female counterpart of Śiva the Supreme deity. But among the common people, śakti is often the presiding deity of fertility cults of folk origin. The similarity of the conception of a divine mother

143. Fleet, *Indian Antiquary*, vol. x, pp. 185ff.
144. Similarly Durgā is praised in the *Mārk. P.* or *DS*, chap. xi, st. 107, as protecting people from all three evils.
145. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 20, p. 23.

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associated with a female counterpart no doubt helped in the integration of the high and low castes of local society.

Following S.C. Roy,[146] who had traced the existence among tribal people of a mother goddess having destructive power over animals, Dr. A. Bhattacharya[147] concluded that Caṇḍī in her origin was a non-Aryan divinity. The absence of her name in earlier Sanskrit texts, popularity of the goddess among the people living beyond the pale of sophisticated Brāhmaṇical culture, emphasis on her awe-inspiring mystic powers of destruction rather than on benign aspects of creation and preservation, and the non-homogeneity of conception about her iconography etc. have also been cited by him in support of his conclusion. In the *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* literature, the goddess has always been described as the kinetic principle responsible for the creator of the cosmos, and the god Śiva is regarded as the static counterpart of the same.[148]

The goddess Maṅgal Caṇḍī has been held by the Śāktas as a deity belonging to their pantheon. It may also be stated that her worship predominates in areas close to the rivers which were once active but have now silted up.

It has been noted earlier that many of the popular deities, belonging to the brāhmaṇical pantheon had their origin in the 9th-12th centuries A.D., but they could gain firm foothold in orthodox society only at a later date after the Muslim invasion. A careful study of the *Maṅgalkāvyas* suggest that these local deities were accepted and worshipped by the upper classes for two reasons. Their adherents propagated the belief that a devotee of one of the popular goddesses was always blessed with enormous wealth and prosperity. But they are not satisfied with this type of prosperity alone. They also stressed upon the endless power of their goddesses in every respect.

It was only natural that the worshippers of the Purāṇic deities opposed the growing popularity and propaganda in favour of the new goddesses, who were referred to by them as witches. But their opposition was almost powerless against the new wave of popularity of such deities. To make these new deities popular among the upper classes their adherents successfully associated those to the predominant god of the Purāṇic tradition.

Because of involvement of the Brāhmaṇical people in trading pursuits, particularly in trade carried out across the seas, necessity had been felt for a deity who would be held as a protector in sea voyage and which would bare affiliation to Brāhmaṇical concept and tradition. The tradition of Tārā, which had been widely prevalent among the sea-faring traders mostly of the Buddhistic affiliation had undoubtedly exerted a strong influence upon other traders but who did not have

146. Roy, S.C., *Orāon Religion and Customs*, *Ranchi* 1928, pp. 60-65.
147. Bhattacharya, A., *BMKI*, 3rd ed. Cal. 1958, pp. 327-53.
148. Dasgupta, S.B., *ORC*, (2nd ed.) Cal. 1962, pp. 318-19, 328-37.

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allegiance to tāntric Buddhism. While thinking about a parallel to this very powerful and effective deity available to the Buddhists, the Brāhmaṇical people could have thought about a deity of their own who would be able to rival the Buddhist deity and who would be held as a deity close to the primeval female power (śakti), by and large connected to Śiva as his consort. This deity of Brāhmaṇical concept was none other than Durgā or Umā or Devī and just another form of this all powerful deity in her saviour aspect had been looked forth to by Brāhmaṇical people as the protector deity, one who protects from various dangers and saves the afflicted from difficulties. As such the idea got associated with that aspect of Devī which had provided safety to the Gods (*Devas*) from the onslaught on Demons like Chaṇḍa and Muṇḍa according to the Brāhmaṇical Purāṇic tradition. This aspect of Devī or Durga came to be known as Caṇḍī but she was none other than Primodical Śakti, the basic mother-goddess of the Brāhmaṇical concept. This aspect of the goddess which finds emphasized in the conception of herself as a mother who protects her offsprings from dangers of various kinds, came to be personified in Caṇḍī who was held as the mother parexcellance, who is ever present as the protecting power, the Universal Mother. Thus Caṇḍī had evolved as a widely popular folk deity among the masses of Brāhmaṇical people, as a saviour and protector who had brought different sections of the society closer to each other. The extent of her popularity can well be guessed from the large number of images representing her in benign and benevolent form discovered from different places of Bengal, and also the *Caṇḍī-maṅgala Kāvyas* written by a number of authors in Bengal.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Caṇḍī in Sculpture and Painting

THE WORSHIP of a female deity conceived in various forms and aspects, specially as the divine and universal mother appears to have been in existence in India from Pre-Vedic times. Many scholars have suggested that the cult of Mother goddess existed in some form or other among the early Indus valley people. Pottery images of the goddess have been found in course of excavations carried out in the proto historic sites, and Mackay was of the opinion that such figures "were kept almost in every house in the ancient Indus cities probably in a recess or on a bracket on the wall".[1] The early Indus valley settlers appear to have worshipped her in her aniconic form. Many 'ring stones' discovered in the sites can justifiably be described as cult objects symbolising the Mother-aspect of the goddess.

Marshall has referred to his own discovery of several curious stone discs, three of which were unearthed from the Bhir Mound at Taxila, one from inside the structures uncovered near the foot of Hāthial (Taxila) and one at Kośām. The Hāthial one is described by Marshall, thus It is of polished sandstone 3¼" diameter, adorned on the upper surface with concentric bands of cross and cable patterns and with four nude female figures alternating with honey-suckle designs engraved in relief around the central hole'.[2] It will be of interest here to compare the above Taxila discs with a partially broken reddish steatite circular disc, about 2½" in diameter, found at Rājghāṭ, which contains on the outer side of its top surface a very well carved decorative design.[3] The decoration consists of a palm tree with a horse by its side, beyond which is a female figure holding a bird in her outstretched right hand ;

1. Mackay, *EIC*, 2nd ed., p. 54.
2. *ASIAR*, 1927-28, p. 66, pl XX, fig. 7.
3. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, 2nd ed. p. 170.

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then follow in successive orders—a long-eared and short tailed animal, a crane, the goddess again with her hands this time stretched downwards, some object which is broken, a second palm-tree, a bird, a small circular disc, the goddess again with the circular disc near her left shoulder, then a winged mythical animal and lastly a crane with a crab-like object near its legs. The goddess is thrice repeated with the various accessory figures noted above in between her three representations. But one thing to be noted here is that, unlike the Taxila disc just described the device appears here on the top surface instead of on the side of the central depression of the disc, and the hole is not there; the surface near the central hole of this one is filled with a beautiful scroll design. The carving is so beautifully executed on this piece, now in the collection of Bhārat Kalā Bhaban Museum at Benaras, that it can justifiably be assigned to the same age to which the Taxila, Kośām and other discs belong.

The same Museum has in its collection another fragment of a red steatite disc unearthed in course of excavations at Rājghāṭ near Benaras, which is also found to be closely similar to the Taxila disc.[4]

This disc has a hole through the centre, around which as in the Taxila ones, are found engraved two nude female figures with their hands stretched downwards with probably a honey-suckle in between them ; on the flat surface of the disc between cable designs are two monkey-like animals holding a creeper(?) with a lizard (or an alligator) in between them ; there is a partially defaced inscription in early Brāhmī script on its rim, which is illegible. Another partly broken disc of similar type had been found from Kośām. This was acquired by the same Museum at Benaras. It contains a much damaged though partially legible inscription in Aśokan brāhmī. It is unfortunate that no sense can be made of this inscription. The ring stone has two bands of decoration cut in relief on one face around the hole. On one band can be seen a row of alligators below a twisted rope, and on the second band are carved several nude female figures between three-pronged trees.

All the above discs can justifiably be regarded as cult objects comparable with the pre-historic ring stones of the Indus valley on the one hand and the *Cakras* and *yantras* of the Śāktas, the Viṣṇupaṭṭas of the Vaiṣṇavas and the *āyagapaṭas* of the Jainas on the other. But these circular stone discs appear to be ideologically more close to the cakras and the yantras of the latter-day Śākta cult. Marshall observes about the Taxila discs, 'In these ring-stones, which are quite small and used perhaps as ex-voto offerings, nude figures of a goddess of fertility are significantly engraved with consummate skill and care inside the central hole, thus indicating in a manner, that can hardly be mistaken, the connection between them and the female principle'.[5]

The association noticeable on some of these discs between the figures of the

4. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, 2nd ed., p. 171.
5. Marshall, *MIC*, vol. I, pp. 62-63.

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mother-goddess with representation of alligator or alligators is also of considerable interest since at a later date these developed a close association between the mother goddess known as Caṇḍī and iguanas as her mount.

So far as our knowledge goes, the earliest example of a female figure having an iguana represented under the feet of the figure hailed from Mathurā and was preserved in the Indian Museum Calcutta (fig. 2). In the short description that accompanies the sculpture was written by John Anderson, "The lower two-thirds of an erect figure of a woman, with legs crossed and with heavy anklets. The figure is thinly draped from the waist downwards, and, on the right side a simple linked double chain, with a wheel-like disc attached, hangs down as far as the right thigh. The disc has a strong resemblance to the Buddhist wheel of the law but it has four knob-like projections at regular intervals along its rim. The figure stands on a cornice, on the front of which a gecko is figured in relief, and some ornaments. This statue has been painted red, and still retains some of the colour".[6]

The sculpture referred to above, now preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi, is dateable from about the 5th century A.D. Though broken at the waist with the upper part missing, its exceptional grace and quality of form and modelling, undoubtedly make it a rare specimen of Indian sculptural enterprise, a masterpiece of conception and execution. At the very first sight, however, one significant character becomes apparent to any discerning eye ; this is the representation of an animal with a long tail, an iguana known in the Indian tradition as *godhikā*, carved upon the slab under the feet of the female figure above. The appearance of the likeness of an animal or even a human being underneath the representation of any male or female human figure happens to be a very common feature in traditional Indian sculpture, most of which bear some religious import. In texts dealing with iconography such representations are denominated as *Vāhanas*. Almost all the deities belonging to Brahmanical, Buddhist, or Jaina tradition have some specific *vāhana* as his or her insignia.

This particular character of Indian icons can be traced from as early as the monuments Bhārhut. At Bhārhut the railing pillars of the stūpa have representations of several life-size human figures, both male and female, identifiable from accompanying labels a yakṣhas, yakshis, nāgas and devatās. Many of these figures show some animal, natural or imaginary under their feet. A male figure bearing a label identifying the figure as the yaksha king Kubera shows a stunted human figure as his *vāhana*. In relevant iconographic literature Kubera is described as *Naravāhana* or having a human as his *vāhana*. Likewise other yakshas and devatās also have some animal figures shown under their feet as appropriate *vāhanas*.

Later, the tradition finds confirmed in the inseparable association of *vāhanas*

6. Anderson, John, *CHACIM*, Part I, p. 183.

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with their respective riders which have been worshipped as deities. According to this tradition the iguana shown beneath the standing female figure referred to above undoubtedly represented nothing but a mount or *vāhana*, and this would be sure enough a proof that the figure represented here was none other than the Brāhmaṇical goddess Gaurī who, according to reliable iconographic literature, had in some form an iguana as her mount. The *Pratimālakshaṇa*, a well known text on iconography has reference to iguana as a mount of Gaurī.[7]

In Jaina iconography also iguana is found mentioned as a mount of Gaurī.[8] In the *Kālikāpurāṇa* iguana is mentioned as an animal sacred and sacrificable to Devī. All these evidences would prove beyond any doubt that the figure from Mathurā was not just a damsel of unspecified nature but was undoubtedly a representation of the highly popular mother goddess Gaurī. Gaurī was also known as Umā and Umā's figure occurs in no uncertain nature in coins of Huvishka for the first time with the identificatory legend OMMO. In the coins also Umā has been shown as a girl in the prime of her youth as in case of the aforesaid figure, which though badly damaged represents her as having unsurpassable charm, delicacy of modelling and shapely proportions.

This figure from Mathurā happens probably, the earliest iconographic representation so far known of the goddess who can be identified as the Brāhmaṇical goddess Gaurī, having iguana as her mount. This goddess had become at one time a highly popular deity with the people of Bengal and in the evolution of the worship of this divine concept probably remain hidden some very interesting aspects of the growth of a culture in which the tribal and primitive population of the peripheral region of Bengal had played a very significant role. In Mediaeval images of Pārvatī found from Bengal, an alligator (or iguana, *godhā*) is almost invariably shown on the pedestal. *Godhā* plays a prominent part in the mythology of the goddess Caṇḍī and Kālaketu in the mediaeval *maṅgalkāvyas* of Bengal. The animal is also found in many Umā-Maheśvara reliefs of southern India. One of the earliest reliefs in which a *godhā* is stretched in two hands of the twelve-armed goddess Mahiṣmarddinī is carved on the Chandragupta Cave facade at Udaygiri (Bhilsā, Madhya Pradesh) and this image can be definitely dated in the first or second quarter of the 5th cent A.D. These details undoubtedly go to prove that the cult of Caṇḍī had originated at a very remote age.

A few images of the Mediaeval period, now exhibited in different museums of Bengal, Bihar and Bangladesh, bear testimony to the fact that this deity had become

7. Śrīvāstava, B. (ed.), *Rūpamaṇḍaṇa*, ch. V, verse 38.
Godhāsanā bhavedgaurī lilayā haṁsavāhanā|
Siṁhāruḍhā bhaveddurgā mātrarah svasvavāhanāh|
8. Bhattacharyya, B.C., *Jaina Iconography*, 2nd. ed., Delhi, 1974, p. 128.

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very popular in Eastern India during the Pre-Muslim age. One image made in black basalt, now in the collection of the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta Univerity, dateable from about the 11th cent A D. reveals the goddess in a well proportioned and finely modelled form and the iguana is found very prominently displayed under the deity, carved upon the pedestal of her seat (fig.1).[9] Metal specimens which can be definitely assigned to the earlier part of the 10th cent are very rare. No inscribed and dated specimens are known, but the Dacca Museum contains some specimens, which by their form and technique can unmistakably be placed somewhere in the 10th century. One of them is an eight armed image of Caṇḍī from Sonarang in Dacca district now in Bangladesh (fig. 3).[10]

Two very unique bronze figures of the Devī are being illustrated here which were (figs. 6,7,8) found at Nālandā and are now preserved in the Nālandā Museum. There are some very striking features present in one of these figures illustrated in (fig. 6) which require some detailed notice.

The three-eyed and four handed figure of the goddess here stands in the samapadasthānaka pose, holding in three of her hands a rosary, a hooked staff (*triśikhā* ?) and a water-vessel (*bhṛṅgāra*) ; there is a creeping iguana near her right leg ; besides the iguana a small lion and another horned animal (a buffalo ?) are shown on the lower section of the pedestal. Naivedyas (offering) are shown heaped on pots on two corners of the pedestal. There is a very beautiful and elaborately designed *śiraścakra* at the back of her head.[11]

Quite a few images representing the goddess have been discovered in different parts of north Bengal and have now been shown in the museum of the Varendra Research society at Rājsāhi. These figures have been identified as air images of Caṇḍī.[12] Of these images mention may de made here of a few discovered respectively from Bihar,[13] Mandoil in the Rājsāhi district (fig. 5), Raigunj in the Dinajpur district[14] (fig. 4) and Maheśvarpāśa in the Khulna district, now in Bangladesh (fig. 11). These images are shown as standing in the *samapadasthānaka* pose, possess four hands and are attended by the bull and the lion. Another characteristic feature common to all of these figures is the symbol of Śiva held in the upper right hand of the deity. A rosary is also held in this hand while the lower one is shown held in the *abhaya* pose. The upper left hand holds a trident while the object held in the lower left is indistinct in the majority of cases. The goddess is

9. *Calcutta Orietanlists*, vol. I, no. 1, p. 8.
10. Banerjee, R D. *EISMS.*, p. 138, pl. LXVIII(b).
11. Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, 2nd. ed., p 501.
12. *CARMVRS*, p. 13 ; Banerjee, R.D., *EISMS*, p. 115, pl. LVII(a).
13. *SCARMVRS*, p. 87, nos. 3953 and 6270.
14. *HSMVSP*, p. 82-83, no. J (a) 1/278; Banerjee, R.D., *EISMS*, pl. LVII (d).

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found attended in certain cases only by Kārtikeya and Gaṇeśa. In a few images there are representation of plantain trees on two sides of the figure and antelopes at the bottom. Figures with such decorations have been found from Mandoil in Rājsāhi, and Raigunj in Dinajpur district. In the specimen found from Maheśvarpāśa in the Khulna district, however the plantain trees are omitted, and there is no figure of Gaṇeśa or Kārtikeya. Instead, one finds the representation of several male and female attendants. In the case of the last two images there is the representation of the *godhikā*, shown upon the pedestal but this animal is absent in the case of the large image from Mandoil and the specimen from Bihar now to be found in Indian Museum, Calcutta.

From Sonarpur in the Dinajpur district of West Bengal was discovered an image of the deity which is now preserved in the State Archaeological Gallery, Calcutta (no. 5131) (fig. 9). Shown in the *samapādasthānaka* pose she has two eyes and four hands. On her forchead appears a small round mark. In the present image the two lower arms are broken. The upper left arm, which is also damaged, seems to have carried a mirror. In the upper right hand, she holds a stick. She is flanked on her right by Gaṇeśa and on the left by Skanda ; both are shown standing on *padmapīṭhas*. The figure of Ganeśa has his right hand on a battle-axe and carries a bowl of sweet meat (modaka) in his left. Similarly, placed on a lotus pedestal, Kārtikeya keeps his left hand on the waist and bears a spear called śakti in the right. At the centre of the pedestal of the image is shown the figure of a *godhikā*.

Another such image, recently acquired by the State Archaeological Gallery, Calcutta (no. S311) had been discovered in almost perfect state of preservation from Birpur in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal (fig. 10). The figure stands in the *samapādasthānaka* pose on a lotus pedestal. She is four armed and three eyed and has a *jaṭāmukuṭa*. She carries a fruit in the lower right hand and a *śalākā* in the upper right. In her upper left hand was a mirror which is now damaged. Her lower left hand is placed on the head of Kārtikeya who holds a śakti in his right hand and places the left hand on his waist. The figure of Gaṇeśa is shown on her right ; he holds in his right hand a battle-axe and carries in his left hand a bowl of sweet-meat. On the left corner of the pedestal of the image is shown the figure of a *godhikā* while on the right side of the pedestal is shown the small figure of a kneeling devotee.[15] Both these sculptures are in the tradition of the Bengal school and can be dated in the late 11th cent A.D.

R.D. Banerjee published in his book on Medieval Images of Eastern India, one interesting image of Devī from the Indian Museum collection (fig. 12). The image comes from the northern part of Bengal and is dated, on stylistic consideration,

15. *Bulletin of the Fine Arts Seminar*, vol. I, no. 1, p. 34.

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in the 12th cent A.D. The goddess has four hands and she stands erect in a *samapādasthānaka* pose. Describing this image Banerjee says, "She holds a lotus in the upper left and an indistinct object in the lower left hand. She is attended by Gaṇeśa on the right and a femal holding a lotus bud on the left. On the pedestal we find the miniature figure of a boar(?)".[16]

R.P. Chanda[17] brings to our notice a similar image from the Stuart Bridge collection in the British Museum.[18] Standing in the *samapādasthānaka* posture the deity is shown as having three eyes and four arms. With her two half-closed lower eyes she is looking downwards. Of her four arms the two lower ones are broken below the elbow. In her upper left hand she holds a mirror and in the upper right an object which Chanda described as a 'peculiar weapon'. On her right stands Gaṇeśa in the *tribhaṅga* pose. He is shown here with two hands. On the left of the goddess is shown a two-armed male figure holding the 'thunder-weapon' in his right hand. Chanda thinks that he may be Kārttikeya. On the left side of the base occurs the miniature figure of an animal whose head is missing. Chanda refers to this animal as a 'lion'. The provenance of this image is unknown, but it exhibits features which connect it with later Pāla images of Bengal.

The description given by Banerjee of the Indian Museum (fig. 12) specimen and that by Chanda of the British Museum specimen are almost identical with a few variations. A close examination of these two images, however, shows that these variations are due to an improper identification of certain attributes and associated figures accompanying the goddess. For example, Banerjee takes the attribute in her upper right hand as a 'lotus', while Chanda refers to it as a 'peculiar weapon'. In fact, the attribute in both the instances happens to be a small stick called *śalākā*. Banerjee commits another error when he identifies the attendant figure on the right as a female holding a 'lotus bud'. The attendant is actually a male figure carrying a śakti in his right hand. Chanda rightly identifies him as Kārttikeya when he finds a similar figure in the British Museum example. But both Banerjee and Chanda fail to make a proper identification of the animal appearing on the pedestal. Banerjee hesitatingly identifies it as a boar and Chanda thinks it to be a lion. But unlike the boar it has a long tail. Again its narrow and elongated muzzle is not a characteristic of the lion. These features indicate that the animal represents a *godhikā* (iguana) which is found as the mount in many of the Devī images.

At Gaya there are quite a few temples which had been built of materials taken from ancient ruins. On a pillar of the well known Viṣṇupāda temple at Gayā is found a representation of the goddess which can be identified as a form of Caṇḍī.

16. Banerjee, R.D. *EISMS*, p. 115.
17. *MISBM*, London, 1936, p. 67.
18. No. 54.

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This image was dedicated in the 14th regnal year of Govindapāla, V.S. 1232 (fig. 13).

There is a unique stone image of Caṇḍī (fig. 14) with an inscription dated in the year of the reign of Lakṣmaṇsena in a private house on the river Burigaṅga in Dacca, the capital of Bangladesh. The image has a couchant lion for her vehicle and and holds *varada mudrā*, *aṅkuśa*, *padma* and *kamaṇḍalu* in her four hands. Like the figures of Gaja Lakṣmī the goddess in this image is shown as being bathed by two elephants with their trunks holding upturned pitchers, carved on the upper portion of the pointed stela. No iconographic text is known which describes such an image, denominated as Caṇḍī in the other inscription. N.K. Bhattasali tentatively identified the image as that of Bhuvaneśvarī on the basis of certain texts in the *Śāradatilaka-tantra* (chapter VIII).[19]

Most of these standing four-armed Devī images found in Bengal have been described as Caṇḍī by some scholars, and as Gauri-Pārvatī by others. Such images are characterised by the erect pose of the central figure, the presence of an iguana on the pedestal, and such attributes as the liṅgam with rosary on the upper right hand, a *tridaṇḍī* or a trident on the upper left, boon offering pose or a pomegranate on the lower right, and a vase on the lower left hand. The attendants shown by the sides of the main figure differ in individual specimens ; some of the images are shown without any attendant with them at all. In case of a few others are found mininature figures of lions and spotted deer just below the attendants. Such images have not only been discovered from various parts of Bengal, but also from distant Jāvā, showing the widely diffused cult of this goddess which probably migrated there from Bengal.[20]

One bronze image of a female deity now preserved in a private collection in Calcutta, calls for attention because of some significant features noted in this image. The height of the image is 18 cms. The deity is shown as seated in *vajraparyaṅka* pose on the pericarp of a single-petaled lotus resting on a rectangular pedestal with recessing tiers. The goddess who sits to front, wears only a lower garment. She is adorned with a girdle, bangles, armlets, ear-rings and a bejeweled thread. Her hair is raised in a neat Chignon, clasped by an ornamented tiara, with locks of hair falling down the shoulders. A lozenge-shaped object (a jewel ?) is shown on the open palm of her right hand which rests on her right knee in boon-offering (*varada*) gesture. Her left hand, which rests on the seats besides her left thigh, with the palm faced downwards, holds by its thumb and the first finger a sprout of corn (*dhānyamañjarī*) (fig. 15).

19. Bhattasali, N.K., *IBBSDM*, p. 202.
20. *JGIS*, vol. IV, 1937, pp. 122-24; 137-44, Pls. XII-XV.

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On the right side of the pedestal we can notice a recumbent iguana (*godhā* or *godhikā*). The front of the pedestal bears an inscription in the proto-Bengali script, which can be read as *Śi-devīḥ* (i.e. *Śrī-devī*) (fig. 15a).

The inscription on the pedestal of the image suggests its identification with Śrī (or Lakṣmī), the Brāhmaṇical goddess of wealth. The sprout of corn and the jewel-like object, held by the image, also support the deity's association with wealth.[21]

The representation of a godhā or iguana which appears on the pedestal of the image, is not associated with Śrī (Lakṣmī) by any of her known concepts. But the same animal has been considered as the mount of the virgin goddess Gaurī.[22] One of the forms of Gaourī is called Śrī. Śrī-Devī has been described as seated on iguana, holding rosary and a lotus flower and having (her) hands (held) in gestures of giving protection (*abhaya*) and boon (*vara*).[23]

The deity in question is also associated with iguana. Even though she does not hold either rosary or lotus, one of her hands is held in a gesture of offering boon. Moreover, the pedestal inscription clearly described her as Śrī.

It appears that the maker of the image in question wanted the deity to be known as Śrī. In doing that the artist was certainly influenced by the concept of Śrī form of the Brāhmaṇical goddess Gaurī.

It is interesting to note that the stela of the image is very sparsely decorated, in contrast to the highly ornamented stela of sculptures of the Pāla and Sena periods (8th to 12th or early 13th cent A.D.).[24] Though contours of the body of the image are prominent, its modelling is coarser than the modelling of a number of icons assigned to the Pāla or Sena school of sculpture. These features and the physiognomical details, showing upturned upper-lip, raised eye-brows and open, almost bulging eyes, tend to assign this icon to the school or sub-school of sculptures which flourished in about the Pāla-Sena age in the south-eastern and eastern regions of the territory now included in Bangladesh.[25]

Rise of the cult of Caṇḍī and the growth of its popularity can be traced not only in the images in stone and metal but also in paintings found from Bengal. In early manuscript illustrations belonging to the Pāla period one can find an extensive representation of figures of Tārā which was a deity commanding great popularity with the Buddhists of the Tāntric Mahāyānic school. Effort has been made above to

21. *Sundaram* (in Bengali), vol. 3, no. 1, 1365 B.S., pp. 140-42.
22. Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, vol. I, part II pp. 113 and 119.
23. *Akshsūtram tathā pa lmamābhyam cha varam tathā]*
Godhāsanāśritā (read *śrıyāh*) *mūrti grhe pūjya Śrıye sadā]* —*Rūpamaṇḍan.*
Rao, T.A.G., *EHI*, vol. I, part II, p. 120.
24. *HB*, vol. I, pp. 335f ; Pl. IXIX, f.
25. Saraswati, S.K., *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, (2nd. ed.) p. 85f.

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show how with the Brāhmaṇical people Caṇḍī, a form of the great mother goddess Gaurī, Umā or Durgā had gained great popularity during the Pāla and the Sena rule. Gradual increase in the popularity of the goddess Caṇḍī can be found in the emergence of images of Caṇḍī in greater number with the passage of time. Unfortunately no representation of Caṇḍī can be found coming down from this age in painting. But at a later age, when the *Maṅgalkāvyas* were gaining wide spread popularity in Bengal, a tradition began to grow to represent the episode of Caṇḍī in painting.

Painting as a popular medium of cultural expression had developed quite independently in Bengal of the temple art and also free from influences of the royal court. The word *Paṭa* in Bengali signifies picture painted on cloth or paper. This word as used in the current dialect had given rise to the word *Paṭua*, meaning a painter. The earliest *Paṭa*-paintings of an art practised from very early times. The *Paṭas* are generally found in two varieties, one belonging to the scroll type and the other of the usual rectangular type. Among these, the scroll type *paṭ* which is now known as *Jarāno paṭ*' is more popular and interesting. These *paṭas* generally 12 to 25 cubits long with 10 to 12 separate selected pictures are arranged in rectangular panels one below the other "each picture being exhibited by the *paṭua* at a time as the scroll is gradually unfolded and as the story of each picture is being chanted to the accompaniment of the traditional ballad composed by the *paṭuas* themselves."[26] mostly classical in type and bearing the dramatic representation of mythology.

Pictures painted on paper dealing with *Caṇḍīmaṅgala* theme so far found from different parts of Western Bengal are not older than a hundred and fifty years. From a subjective point of view *paṭs* found from Midnapur show predilection for *Kṛshṇalīlā* and *Maṅgalkāvya* scenes. Burdwan and Nadia have marked preference for *Chaitanyalīlā*, while Bīrbhum and Bankura are equally fond of Vaiṣṇava, Śakti and Manasā paṭs which are also popular in Manbhum.

A Śakti-paṭa depicting the story of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal* episode preserved in the Art Section of the Indian Museum (Reg. no. 15046), hailed from Birbhum. This paṭ can probably be assigned to the 19th century A.D. (fig. 18). The colours used in this paṭ may be enumerated as red, yellow, blue, green, black and pink.[27] The *Paṭ* gives a detailed illustration of the story of the merchant-sailor Dhanapati and his son. Such paṭs were executed in large number and were carried by the painter-musicians from village to village showing the popularity of the story and the wide-spread devotion which was held for the mighty goddess Caṇḍī whose worship brought about redemption from distress and abounding prosperity. Such paṭs may be held as evidence of the extensive popularity enjoyed by the goddess Caṇḍī among the masses of common people in Bengal. The *paṭ* under survey may be held as a good

26. Ghosh, D.P., *Folk Art of Bengal*, p. 2ff.
27. *Indian Museum Bulletin*, vol. V, no. 2, July, 1970, p. 151ff.

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representative of such *paṭs* may be described here in some detail to bring out the inner story and the way how the story was rendered in a visual form.

The entire *jarāno paṭ* (rolled up) is divided into 9 compartments of which three are big panels representing Kamalekāmiṇī, Śālavāhana, the king of Ceylon and representation of goddess Caṇḍī as Mahiṣāsuramardinī. The rest of the panels are smaller in size. The different panels may be described as follows :—

Panel no. 1

Here the artist depicts the childhood of Śrīpati and his sports, with other boys, as in case of Kṛshṇa of the Purāṇic tradition, such as the breaking of *Dadhibhāṇḍa* (curd bowls) etc. Trinayaṇā-Caṇḍī is standing and her worship has been suggested by three poṭs under a tree with five red round spots probably suggesting vermillion marks.

Panel no. 2

This panel shows the inside of the house of Dhanapati where Śrīpati is seated on the lap of Khullanā. He is also represented standing outside the house with her mother while Caṇḍī with four hands is shown standing with two persons on the right side. This panel represents that portion of the story where Śrīpati had shut himself inside a room being aggrieved on account of a quarrel that he had with his guru (teacher) who had insulted him by questioning the legitimacy of his birth. Śrīpati was consoled by his mother and he told her that he would go to Ceylon to bring his father back. Khullanā in distress permitted him to do so. At that time goddess Caṇḍī was passing by and she instructed Viśvakarmā, the divine architect, and his son Dārubrahmā to make boats for the voyage of Śrīpati.

Panel no. 3

This panel depicts the scene of departure of Śrīpati for Ceylon in his boat and how his neighbours had assembled to bid him farewell.

Panel no. 4

In this panel is depicted the scene of Śrīpati's vision of Kamalekāmiṇī in the sea of Kalidaha near Ceylon. The sight of Kamalekāmiṇī by Śrīpati is very nicely depicted in this panel. The goddess Caṇḍī having three eyes and bedecked with a crown and jewellery of various kinds appear in the guise of Kamalekāmiṇī who is revealed as seated on a full blown lotus in lalitāsana. She is encircled by a creeper having lotuses and buds all over and she holds a four-armed elephant by her left hand. At a distance is depicted a boat with Śrīpati along with three other members of his party shown as looking towards the figure of the deity with an expression of great wonder in their eyes. The figure of the goddess shows a golden yellow

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complexion, wears a deep red sāri, and is decked with jewellery of various kinds. She is represented against a blue back-ground of water. The colour scheme as well as the composition make this portion of the paṭa vibrate with brightness and warmth. A description of Kamalekāmiṇī as seen by Śrīpati is given in Chapter II of the present thesis.

The sight of the goddess on a full-blown lotus devouring and belching out an elephant alternately had brought disaster to Dhanapati and his son Śrīpati. The appearance of Caṇḍī in this manner was no doubt an ominous sign for the merchant community. The merchants were blessed by the grace of Kamalā (Lakshmī) who is represented as Gajalakshmī where two elephants pour water on her. This form of goddess Lakshmī is symbolic of incessant flow of wealth and prosperity. But the vision witnessed by Dhanapati and his son revealed that the elephant was being devoured by the deity instead of her being besprinkled by water poured by the elephants.

Panel no. 5

In the fifth panel is shown the arrival of Śrīpati at the *Ratnamālār* Ghat in Ceylon and his '*pikes*' (attendants) started striking drums announcing their arrival.

Panel no. 6

In this panel Śālavāhana, the king of Ceylon, is shown seated on a throne with courtiers, Śrīpati is depicted as standing before the king to introduce himself and to give an account of his sea voyage.

The artist has not depicted that portion of the story which narrates the failure of Śrīpati to show Kamalekāmiṇī to the king in Kalidaha. Caṇḍī appeared to save Śrīpati in the guise of an old Brāhmaṇi and she had defeated the king's army. Śālavāhana prayed to Caṇḍī and promised to give his daughter in marriage to Śrīpati if he can show Kamalekāmiṇī.

Panel no. 7

By the grace of Caṇḍī, Śrīpati had been able to show the king (Śālavāhana) the scene of Kamalekāmiṇī, and the king with his courtiers paid reverence to her with folded hands.

Panel no. 8

In this panel goddess Caṇḍī is represented in her form as Bhagavatī or Durgā, having eighteen arms and killing the demon Mahiṣāsura. Śālavāhana is shown standing with folded hands singing hymns to Caṇḍī, as mentioned in the Caṇḍīmaṅgal by Kavikaṅkana Mukundarām.

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Panel no. 9

In the last panel is shown the marriage of Śrīpati and Śuśīlā, the daughter of the king of Siṁhala, Śālavāhan, and the invited guests.

The three-quarter view, marking of the chin on the face as well as the strong bold lines of the dress and bright colours are some of the stylistic traits of these jarāno paṭs. There is another example of a scroll painting depicting the story of Kamalekāmiṇī shown in part, displayed in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, (fig. 19). This paṭ of about 19th cent was collected from south 24 Parganas and is now displayed in the painting gallery of Asutosh Museum (fig. 20). In the story of Dhanapati-Śrīmanta, the goddess is shown as if sitting upon a full blown lotus floating upon the waves of the sea and swallowing an elephant. In the painting however, she is shown as if sitting with an elephant upon her lap.

Irrespective of the deity found installed inside, the temples built in Bengal from about the 17th to as late as the close of 19th century A.D., in shape and ornamental details on the outer walls followed more less a well developed pattern. In the case of wall decoration, stories from epics and also from myths connected with goddess Durgā, Kālī etc., the story of Kamalekāmiṇī had become an extremely popular subject for depiction. In a number of temples the story of Kamalekāmiṇī, particularly the scene where the merchant Dhanapati or his son Śrīpati brings the king of Ceylon to show the manifestation of the goddess eating the elephant seated upon the waves of the sea is found delineated with all the dramatic appeal inherent in the scene. Here is reproduced an illustration from the wall of a temple in Dasgharā, in Hooghly district (fig.21).

One interesting bronze vase collected from somewhere in 24 Parganas, very probably from some southern region of this district, and now displayed in the State Archaeological Museum, Calcutta, depicts an unusual represention of the image of Caṇḍī upon a *ghaṭ* (figs. 16,17). The broad bottom of the ghaṭa narrows gradually, having a tall funnel shaped neck, terminates in a hollowed flat disc shaped top. On one side of this small vase is found represented in almost a three diamentional form the figure of a seated female in a *Lalitāsana* pose upon a well stretched animal, the head of which indicates it to be an iguana. The hair-do of the figure is secured by a band round the head with an ornamented clasp in the front. The fore-head of the figure is broad, she has slightly arched eye-brows, almond eyes, broad nose and sensitive lips. The deity wears a pair of heavy ear-pendants, a moon shaped breast ornament, a pair of bracelets, a waist-band and a strap like ornament coming down from the left shoulder. Her right hand is shown resting upon her right knee in varada pose while her left hand holds something like a vase. The modelling of the face and the body, treatment of the ornaments are strongly indicative of the primitive origin of the entire conception and delineation. This vase

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shaped presentation of the goddess offers an evidence of the fact that at one stage the goddess was invoked and worshipped in a vase. In the Purāṇic tradition, the deities to be worshipped can be invoked in an image or in a *ghaṭ*. In case of the *ghaṭ* described here shows that the worshippers had desired to have an anthropomorphic representation of the deity attached to the ghaṭ. Use of a vase or pitcher filled with water while invoking a deity is found in vogue among many tribal groups of people in India. The affiliation of the vase described here with characteristics of primitive order is worthy of notice.

Location of Important places associated with the cult of Caṇḍī

The cult loyalty of the Bengali Hindus, especially in the urban areas and among the well-to-do in the rural areas, depends largely on personal preference. Different members of the same family may worship divinities of varying cults. Members of the Hindu society generally believe in the supremacy of a number of major godheads of the Brāhmaṇical faith together with a few cult heads included in the Hindu pantheon. A few local gods and goddesses having folk base are worshipped in southern Bengal stretching from the Sundarbans to south Midnapur. Over this area these deities are held in high esteem. It is not unreasonable to suppose that in the past, when the lower stretch of the Bhāgīrathī was not so important as at present and when the vigorous course of the Sarasvatī passed through Hooghly and Howrah districts and thereafter through the channel of the Ādi Ganga in 24 Parganas, the southern part of this region was geographically one stretch of land where the worship of many folk gods and goddesses thrived. Village folks of West Bengal, specially residents of the districts of Howrah, Hooghly, Birbhum, Bankura, Burdawn, 24 Parganas and Midnapur have held the goddess Caṇḍī in great respect and have worshipped her almost in every village.

The district of Howrah[27a] abounds in places where Caṇḍī, a śākta deity of supposedly non-Aryan origin have been worshipped from very early days. In the northern parts of the district she is seen in many villages in the form of a folk goddess worshipped under trees and places held sacred to Caṇḍī. It is peculiar that her worship predominates in areas close to the rivers which were once actively navigated by many boats but which channels have now silted up. Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharya considers Caṇḍī to be of Austric or Dravidian origin. He cites S.C. Roy[28] in order to prove the similarity between goddess Caṇḍī worshipped by the Oraons of Chotanagpur and the goddess of the same name worshipped in Bengal. In the Howrah district the goddess is worshipped under many names such as Kalyāncaṇḍī (worshipped by archers), Maṅgalcaṇḍī (of the tradesman), Mākālcaṇḍī (of the fishermen),

27a. Banerji, A.K., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Howrah, 1972, 513ff.
28. Roy, S.C., *ORC*, Ranchi, 1928, pp. 60-65.

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Somāicaṇḍī or Samicaṇḍī (of betel-leaf cultivators and traders) etc. Besides, the name of Caṇḍī is found connected with a number of diseases, such as Olaicaṇḍī, in which form she is held as curing cholera, and Basancaṇḍī (same as Śītalā and curing small-pox). Melaicaṇḍī, Biraicaṇḍī, Makarcaṇḍī, Betaicaṇḍī, Joycaṇḍī, Gadcaṇḍī Dakaicaṇḍī, etc. are also names frequently heard of among the common people in this area.[29] In no other district in West Bengal, the goddess is known to have such a wide variety of names and association.

Of the most popular forms of Caṇḍī worshipped in the district, mention may be made of Melāicaṇḍī found at Amta, Makarcaṇḍī at Makardaha and Olāicaṇḍī at Kāsundia within Howrah city ; the last mentioned deity is worshipped not in a temple but on an elevated plat form by a Muslim Fakir.[30] That Caṇḍī may embrace the attributes of other gods and goddesses of the Hindu faith is evident from the image of Gadcaṇḍī of Raspur under Āmtā police station. Here the image looks like that of Durgā having two hands. Figures representing a number of gods and goddesses, namely Śaṣṭhī Dakshin Ray, Panchānan, Manasa, Sītalā etc. are placed by the side of the image of Gadcaṇḍī which is held as the principal deity under worship.

In many riparian villages of the district seats of the goddess Biśālākshī (who has many variant names) are also found[31] as being held in great respect. In the village of Ratanpur in Syāmpur P.S. she is called Ratnamālā. She has ten hands and is shown seated on a tiger which suggests that she might have been conceived here as a sylvan deity.[32] In some other places she is shown having four hands. All these images are mostly images made of clay. Where she is not represented by an earthen image, a piece of stone is found as the object of worship. She is extensively worshipped by fishermen and honey-collectors. Fishermen and people belonging to the Rājbanśī or *Tiyar* castes worship her with great eclat before starting on fishing expeditions. "In many villages of southern Bengal Biśālakshī is represented by a figurine sitting on the back of a tiger, and accordingly, like *Dakshin Ray*, she is sometimes also known as the goddess of tigers."[33] The worship of Biśālākshī as a tiger-goddess both in south 24 Parganas and Howrāh confirms our earlier suggestion that these two districts formed one geographical and cultural unit in the past. Though the goddess Biśālākshī (also known as Bāśulī or Bāñśulī), held as a manifestation of śakti or the mother principle, by the Brāhmaṇical Hindu, she is essentially a folk-goddess. She is not found mentioned in any of the early Hindu texts. But it has been held by some scholars that the name Biśālākshī had been derived from the name of goddess Vāgīśvarī.

29. Santra, T., *Howrah Jelār Lok-Utsav*, Howrah, 1369 B.S., p. 36.
30. Basu, Gopen, *Bāngālir Laukik Devatā*, Cal. 1966, pp. 27 & 188.
31. Santra, T., *op. cit.*, p. 33.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
33. Das, A.K. and M.K. Raha, *The Orāons of Sundarban*, Calcutta, 1963, p. 267.

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It seems likely that she was originally worshipped by the Buddists of the Tāntric school but by virtue of her popularity, she came to be included in the Brāhmaṇical Hindu pantheon like Kālī, Caṇḍī, Manasā, Śītalā and Ṣaṣṭhī.[34]

Śītalā, a very common folk-goddess of the district, also probably of non Aryan origin, has her incantation recorded in the *Skandapurāṇa*. It is supposed that she was taken into the Hindu fold at a later date. As the controlling deity of small-pox, she seems to be of indegenous origin,[35] having no reference in early religious texts. Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharyya has traced similarities between Śītalā of Bengal and certain folk-goddesses of south India.[36] In this district of Howrah the worship of this deity, also called '*Basanta Caṇḍī*', is fairly widespread. This goddess has no temple dedicated to her and She is generally worshipped under a tree. In many places a poṭ or a piece of stone is installed as a symbol, and is worshipped in her name. Elsewhere an earthen image shows Basanta Caṇḍī seated on an ass, carrying a broomstick in one hand and a pot in the other with a winnowing fan on her head. Songs composed by a local poet of Midnapur are sung by professional singers on the occasion of the annual worship of Śītalā at various places in this district.[37]

Mākardaha, is a large prosperous village in Domjur police station situated on the right bank of the derelict channel of Sarasvatī. The shrine of Mākarcaṇḍī, after whom the village is named, is a reputed place of Hindu pilgrimage. Legend has it that Śrīmanta, the merchant hero of *Caṇḍīmaṅgal*, was an ardent devotee of the goddess and he used to stop here and make offerings to the deity while journeying along the Sarasvatī on his many voyages. A hintal tree on the south-west of the temple is pointed out as the anchor of Śrīmanta's ship It is said that the original temple having fallen down the goddess appeared in a dream to the blind zamindar Ramnarayan Kundu Chowdhury of Andul-Mahiari and asked him to build a temple for her. Accordingly, Ramnarayan erected the present *āṭchālā* shrine in 1801 and reportedly regained his vision. The deity is represented by a rectangular piece of black basalt sticking out of a square depression in the centre of the sanctum. A close examination reveals that the stone was originally an architectural fragment, possibly the corner stone of a *śikhara* tower of modest height. The top of the stone, now besmeared with vermillion is regarded as the face of the goddess. The Dol festival of Mākarcaṇḍī held on the 5th day after the general Dol ceremony in the month of Phalgun (Feb-Mar.) is the principal festival of the place. The ceremony which continues for fifteen days is celebrated with a spectacular display of fireworks along with other festivities.

34. Basu, Gopendra Krishna, *Bāṅgālir Laukik Devatā*, Calcutta, 1966, pp. 50-51.
35. Bhattacharyya, A., *BMKI*, pp. 693-94.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 697.
37. Santra, T., *op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

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An area in the southern part of the town of Howrah is known as Betor or Betaitala. It is situated within the jurisdiction of Sibpur P.S. The earliest mention of the place as Betrāraka is found in a land grant of the Sena period.[38] A reference to Betor (as also to Ghusuri, another part of the town is found in the *Manasāmaṅgal* of Bipradās Pipilai composed about 1498 A.D. Bipradas mentions of a shrine dedicated to Goddess Betāi Caṇḍī at Betor after whom the immidiate vicinity of the temple came to be known as Betāitalā. The deity is still in worship but vestiges of her original temple, well-known to the merchant community towards the end of 15th century, can not be traced any more. Betor located at the junction of the river Sarasvatī and Bhāgirathī perhaps grew up as a subsidiary port of Saptagrām ; the sea-going vessels sailed mostly up to this point while smaller vessels carried cargo from this point to Saptagrām up the river Sarasvatī.

When we proceed to study the cult of Caṇḍī as practised in the district of Hooghly[38a] we are led to the tentative conclusion that Caṇḍī has been a generic name given to several goddesses who however share no identity about the powers and functions attributed to those deities. This disunity exists in their respective iconographic forms as well. In this district, the name Caṇḍī is often prefixed by such appelations as Borāi, Olāi, Bulāi, Onchāi, Raṇa, Gaṛh, Jot, Maṅgal etc. Most of these deities worshipped as Caṇḍī in the district are village deities with their modest shrines found located under shady trees. Either the entire village folk or a particular caste or some castes of the same order share the responsibility of management of the affairs of the deity. The devotees do not generally take the help of professional priests for the day-to-day services but on special occasions they employ Brāhmins or even low-caste persons as priests. In most cases these deities have no iconic form ; usually a stone installed upon a platform serves as the object of worship.

Among such village deities worshipped as Caṇḍī, the goddess Borāicaṇḍī of Chandannagore which has a temple in which she is installed is the most famous. Originally, the object of worship here was just a piece of stone. But now there is an image in this temple having four arms and riding a makara. The god Śiva is held as her consort and he is worshipped in the form of a lingam in the temple. On the last day of Bengali year synchronising with the Gajan festival of Śiva, a ceremony called the *Pāṭbhāṅgā Utsav*, is held in honour of the goddess.

At Dakshin Mogalpur in Dhaniakhali P.S., the goddess worshipped as Caṇḍī is known as Jayacaṇḍī while at Tarakeswar she is known as Onchāicaṇḍī. Both

38. Bhattasali, N.K., Lakshmanasener Nabāviṣkrita Saktipur śāsan O Prāchīn Bṅager Bhaugolik Bivāg (in Beng.) *SPP*, Calcutta, 1339 B.S.
Roy Vidyanidhi, J. Ch., Prāchīn Banger Bivāg, *SPP*., 1340 B.S. Datta, K., Pauṇḍravardhana O vardhamāna-bhukti, *SPP*, 1341 B S.

38a. Banerje, A.K., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Hooghly, 1972 p. 648ff.

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these deities are held in high esteem for their supposed power of curing incurable diseases. In the village of Jot Caṇḍī (Goghat P.S.) which takes its name after the famous deity of the place, a big festival is held once in the year on the last day of the Bengali month of Chaitra (April). In pūrva Govindapur a village in the Jangipara P.S., a Vaiṣṇava temple dedicated to Śrīdhara houses a symbolic stone representing Goddess Caṇḍī as an ancillary deity. Such co-existence of divinities of different sects can be found in quite a number of temples in the district. Legend has it that the name Caṇḍītalā another well known village of the district, arose from the name of Caṇḍī believed to have been originally worshipped there by the legendary Srīmanta Sadāgar of the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvyas*.

The district of Birbhum[39a] has been a seat of Śaktism and śakti worship from a very ancient age. Tradition holds that there are as many as six *Śākta pīṭhas* in this district and this proves that Śakti cult has been prevailing here[39] since the days of the later Guptas or the Pālas. While the cult of the mother-goddess is considered to be current since pre-Vedic days, 'Śakti' as a female creative force came to be connected with the *Devī-śūkta*, a hymn of the *Ṛgveda* (X, 125). In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* Sakti came to be euologised in the form of Caṇḍī. In course of time the from, however, became eclectic, assimilating many non-Aryan features and proliferating in varied forms and names till Buddhist mysticism got mixed with it. The fusion of Śāktism and Buddhist mysticism may have created the highly asoteric and Tāntric form of Śākta worship in the *Śākta pīṭhas* on the one hand, and the popular form of worship of the deity under various names throughout the district.

A place in Labhpur in this district, known as a sacred seat from an earlier period when the *pīṭhanīrṇaya* text was written, is hallowed by the legend that Sati's lips (*oṣhṭha*) fell here at the time of dismemberment of her body. Phullarā the presiding goddess, along with her male consort (Bhairava) attracts the Śāktas to this place.

Caṇḍīdās, the Vaiṣṇava sahajiyā poet of the pre-Chaitanya days, worshipped Biśalakshi or Bāśulī at Nanur. The temple and image may still be found here in the way as those existed during the time of Caṇḍīdās. The goddess Bāśulī or Viśālākshī, a śākta deity, is also called Bāgīśvarī. Although she is one of the ten Mahāvidyas of the Śāktas, tāntrik-Buddhistic traits as also folkish characteristics have been traced in her. A big fair called *Caṇḍīdās-melā* is held here on the full-moon day of Phālgun (Feb-Mar) on the occasion of *Doljātrā* festival every year. The fair commences through a worship of the goddess Viśālākshī and lasts for about a month.

In this district Caṇḍī is considered to be a deity of the śākta tradition. Although Caṇḍī is worshipped independently at Krishnapur and Bhabaniganj in Khairasol P.S.?

39. Majumder, R.C. (ed.), *HB* vol-I, Dacca, 1943, p. 407.
39a. Majunder, D. (ed.), West Bengal District Gazetteers, Birbhum, 1975, p. 569.

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of Birbhum, she is generally associated with Dharamarajṭhkaur as Śaktī is with Śiva. The goddess is also to be found in different forms at different places of the district bearing names like Pāyrācaṇḍī, Byaghracaṇḍī, Barāhicaṇḍī, Sonāicaṇḍī etc.

It has already been pointed out how the religious cults, beliefs and rituals of some of the important tribes and castes of Bankura, have been gradually absorbed into the extensive folds of the Hindu society without many of their traditional associations being lost. We have also seen how the unorthodox tribal and caste groups of Bankura have taken to the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses, through methods which are not particularly orthodox. Such cross-cultural fertilization has contributed definite regional characteristics to local Hinduism. The principal cults of Dharma and Manasā widely prevalent here bear very strong elements of the religious beliefs and practices of the *Ādivāsīs* on the one hand and Hindu population on the other. The other major popular cults of this district are those of Śiva and Caṇḍikā.

Now Caṇḍikā devi or Caṇḍī, regarded as being one of the 'Śaktis' held her away in this part of the country when the śakti-cult had been a predominant religious order of the region. In the Rāḍha area, the most popular legend about Caṇḍī is spun round a low caste hunter named Kālketu in the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya.*

Before their conversion to the Gauḍiya Viṣṇava Bhakti cult, the goddess *Mṛinmayee*—which is but another name of Caṇḍikā Devī—used to be the family deity of the Vishnupur royal house. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Chaṇḍikā Devī has also been referred to as Ambikā. At Ambikānagar in Ranibandh P.S., the temple of Ambikā attracts pilgrims from far and near. She is apparently a goddess of Jaina origin although her present worship is conducted according to Hindu rites. There is another Ambika in the village of Shaharjora in P.S. Bajora. Here the present temple may be a recent one, but legends about the deity connect her to a very old tradition.

Usually known by their joint name, Hadal and Narayanpur are (or were) actually two adjacent villages in the Patrasayer P.S. There are some temples displaying good terracotta embellishments and an excellent black basalt sculpture of the Pāla period, of a deity popularly worshipped as Brahmāṇī. The worship of Caṇḍī has been fairly wide-spread in this district, the cult could have been more popular in the past. Brahmāṇī of this place appears to be the same deity as Caṇḍikā in her gentler manifestation.[40]

A curious form of survival of tree worship, which is still practised in the district of 24-Parganas, under the name of Dhelai Caṇḍī, was discovered by Mm. H.P. Shāstri, who gives a detailed account of this in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Part-III, 1902.

My attention was directed to this form of tree worship which is of recent

40. Bandyopadhyay, A.K., *Bānkurār Mandir*, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 62-63.

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growth. I have been informed that several date trees in the Naihati area are being accorded deep devotion and worship. There are two such trees near the Kāñchārā-pārā station, on to its north-east on the khal which is an old bed of the Jamuna, at a place named Kantaganj, and the other to the south-west of the station and to the west of the locomotive workshops, near the Shah-dighī, an old tank with huge banian trees, said to have excavated by Malik Sahib about two hundred fifty years ago when he had founded the old mosque at Bag. There is a third place near Majipara on the road which runs from the Gauripur mills to that village. There is a fourth at Chandigarh on the Āmdaṅgā road, a fifth, on the old road leading to Narayanpur (now very little used because of the construction of a metalled road from Kankinara station to that village), and a sixth, at Mandalpara.

In other districts viz. Burdawan and Midnapur the worship of this goddess is widely prevalent among the lower classes. She is called Gramya Devata and is worshipped on the occasion of every religious ceremony, and also on special occasions, for instance when a disease breaks out or a new-landlord of the village celebrates *pujā* usually under a pipal or banyan tree, while each ryot performs his own ceremony at home. Some times a Brahmin officiates at the time of worship but frequently the people conduct the worship themselves.

The survey above would prove that at one time goddess Caṇḍī had become an extremely popular deity with the local inhabitants. In fact a fascination about the ultimate power conceived as a female principle started gaining ground at a fairly early age. Among a host of divinities held in worship by the people, a female deity held as a mother goddess, conceived both as a benign as well as a fearsome power started gaining ground with the rise of Tāntrism. At one time Tārā had been held as the most popular female diety among the Buddhists while among the Brahmanical Hindus Durgā Mahiśāsuramardinī had gained the greatest popularity. But from about the 8th-9th centuries of the Christian era Caṇḍī arose as a deity of considerable importance. She had by and large absorbed the elements inherent in the Buddhist goddess Tārā, known in many forms and the Brāhmaṇical deity Durgā and had ultimately, almost completely eclipsed all other female deities in order to emerge as the all encompassing goddess Caṇḍī whose popularity was never matched by any other female deity held in worship in Bengal.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Epilogue

THE STUDY on 'Goddess Caṇḍī, the popular folk deity of Bengal' shows that the heritage of this deity is a very rich and ancient one. In the hay days of her popularity the goddess came to be extolled as the greatest personification of power or śakti. The conception of śakti has reached a stage of its maturity in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. As a matter of fact, in this Purāṇa the personification of the great primordial power of the world or Śakti came to be eulogised as the all pervading power revealed through the female principle, the essence of world power being manifest in this female aspect of energy. The female energy had been an element of great mystery and wonder to the primitive mind of men and women in India as elsewhere and this mysterious female energy came to be worshipped and invoked in a variety of names. In India, the Vedic traditions however had rather a poorer appreciation of this female principle and the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic texts attribute comparatively scanty euphemism in favour of deities of the female sex. But the *Mahābhārata* bears high eulogies for the goddess Durgā and the Purāṇas by and large bring about the recognition of the female energy as female deities under various names. But the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* enlarges the extent of this female deity by establishing a new philosophy in which all creative and active principles in this universe were conceived as one unified principle, though manifest in many forms. As such by this idea of comprehensiveness, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* had encompassed all the female deities which were being worshipped in India from very remote days and by the numerous tribal and other non-Vedic elements also within the all pervading basic energy conceived as Śakti. In this process first Durga was recognised as the all comprehensive śakti in the *Mahābhārata* and other female deities gradually came to be recognised as manifestations of śakti in the different Purāṇas.

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This popularity of Caṇḍī in the traditions of Bengal is vouched in one of the widely known literary compositions in Bengali namely the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalkāvya*.[1] This ballad which extolls the greatness of the goddess Caṇḍī is found to have two different facets of the growth of Bengali culture. The *Kāvya* has two different stories joined up in an incoherent manner, the only link between the two being devotion to Caṇḍī. In one of the stories the hero is named Śrīmanta, who was a merchant carrying out trade with distant countries like Siṁhala across the sea. In this story the goodess Caṇḍī is eulogised as a protector of the merchants engaged in trade with countries across the seas. This story recalls the days when Bengal had a flourishing sea trade.

The second story has an interesting bearing on the character of the deity which makes her one and the same with Gauri, the goddess having the iguana as her mount. In this story, Kālketu the hero was a person belonging to the *Vyādha* community who used to earn his livelihood by hunting wild animals but was very poor. The goddess here has been portrayed as a guardian of the wild animals who approached the deity in order to seek for her protection against the depredations of Kālketu the *Vyādha* leader. The deity assured them protection and herself assumed the form of an iguana gold and lay in waiting for the *Vyādha* to pass by. That day Kālketu inspite of every effort could not get any animal and had to come back without any kill. When there was only a prospect of starvation before him for the day, he came across the iguana who almost allowed itself to be caught without much effort. Kālketu brought the iguana home. He kept the animal tied to a post in his hut and went out for a bath. The iguana in the meanwhile assumed the form of an exquisitely beautiful damsel and Phullarā the wife of Kālketu saw her and felt extremely jealous. Ultimately, due to the blessings of the goddess, Kālketu established a kingdom and met with fortunes which the couple had never dreamt of.

In this second story the aspect of the goddess which gains eminence is of considerable interest. Firstly the goddess is revealed as a presiding guardian of the wild animals of the forest. The *Vyādhas* of the tradition were a people outside the orthodox Brāhmaṇical fold, apparently a member of the tribal population. Hunting as a livelihood was looked upon as unbecoming for persons belonging to the orthodox community. Under compulsion of circumstances, Kālketu gave up his ancestral profession and by founding a kingdom and taking to a way of life approved according to orthodox Brāhmaṇic tradition he was accepted in the Brāhmaṇical fold of culture. As such, the deity worshipped by him was also accepted in the Brāhmaṇic fold and came to be held as one and the same with the Primordial Śaktī of the Puranic tradition. In this connection mention may be made of the *Devīpurāṇa* which states that the goddess (śakti) lives in the Himalayas as Śivā, in the Malay mountain as Nanda in the Kiṣkindhyā as Bhairavī and in the Vindhya hills as Maṅgalā.[2] This term

1. Bandyopadhyay, C.C. (ed.), *Caṇḍī Maṅgal Bodhinī*, Calcutta.
2. *Devi. P.*, ch. XXXVIII.

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Maṅgalā attributed to the deity presiding over the Vindhya hills is of considerable significance. In interior villages of Bengal a goddess named Maṅgala Caṇḍī is still found to command considerable popularity. Indeed the *Devī Purāna* indicates how the female deities held in worship by the people, probably of the tribal and indigenous group settled in different regions were acculturated and given recognition in the orthodox Brāhmaṇical tradition. As such Maṅgala Caṇḍī could have been one such deity of tribal tradition held in esteem originally in the wilderness of the Vindhya region later adopted in fold of the village folks of Bengal.

The sanctity of iguana in the hill regions of Central India probably accounts for the appearance of the iguana with the goddess Caṇḍī in sculpture. In Bengal this acculturation and absorbtion of primitive elements connected with the worship of female energy within the Brahmanical fold and thereby accommodating people belonging to primitive communities probably find reveal ed in the tradition of Caṇḍī worshipped by Kālketu. Different groups of tribal peoples settled in different regions of the country preferred in many cases to remain aloof and unaffected by the more culturally advanced neighbours who had evolved a society ruled by Brahmanical precepts. Though quite conscious about these comparatively unsophisticated groups of people trying to live their own ways of life, the Brāhmaṇical society on their own did not so much want to interfere with the way of life of these people. But it appears that they were not quite averse to these people and sometimes would even accept the objects of veneration of these people within the fold of their own range of divinities. The acceptance of goddess of the iguana in the Brāhmaṇical society may be held as a case in evidence. This case is however not an exception but happens to be one among many. Among many of the tribal people there exist faith in and veneration towards esoteric powers personified in female principles. This symbol of power believed to be a female entity conceived as a guardian or patron was known in different regions and by different people by different names. Veneration of the female principle could have at the outset, evolved due to the mystery attached to her fertility. This led to her being epitomised as the great mother, who not only causes birth but also provides sustenance through vegetation. The magic of this power of fertilisation was further augmented through her being conceived as a protector from dangers of various kinds. This protective character of the goddess can be traced to have originated from her being conceived as the power which sustains through providing food. Milk as magically produced in mother's breast saving the child from the clutches of death in the form of starvation. Emphasis was also laid on the protective aspect of the mother who also destroys all natural dangers of the new born child. It is this power upon the earth which grows plants and crops bearing food for the living. The Purāṇas have got an account about a draught lasting over a hundred years at the end of which, on the behest and invocation of the *riṣis* the goddess appeared as Śatākshī and saved the

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people by producing edibles upon her own body in the form of herbs (Śāka) and thus had earned the name Śākambharī. While in this form she saves the people by producing food, in the form of Durgā she kills the demon of destruction, a buffalo, a veritable destroyer of edible plants, herbs and crops. Based on this idea the same Śatākshī was identified with Durgā, Umā, Gaurī, Satī, Gaṇḍī, Pārvatī and all such other female deities who were considered as different manifestations of the same, primordial female principle invoked as Śakti. It is hence quite interesting to trace how the concept of Gauri who was adopted from a female deity connected with the totem animal iguana worshipped by same primitive totemistic tribe living around the Vindhyas and was absorbed in the Brāhmaṇical fold by the propounders of the Purāṇic faiths. In Bengal she was made to evolve into Caṇḍī at a later age and was adopted as almost a tutelary deity by the people who sought prosperity by maritime trade on the one hand and new settlements and agriculture extending over extensive forest land taking local tribal people within their fold. The growth of popularity of this deity in Bengal probably holds a key to many of the cultural riddles, which pervade numerous social customs and beliefs held by the people of this part of the country.

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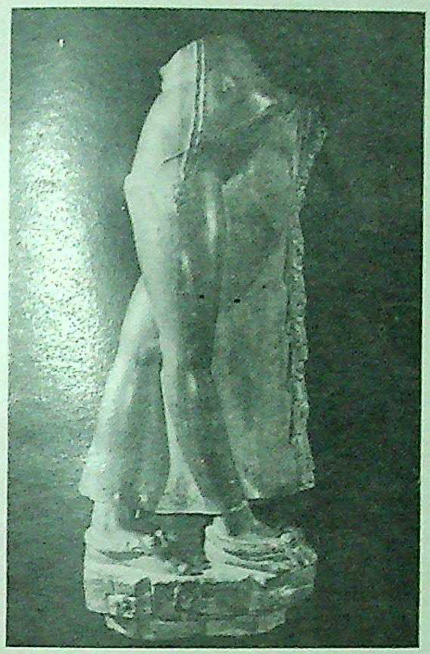

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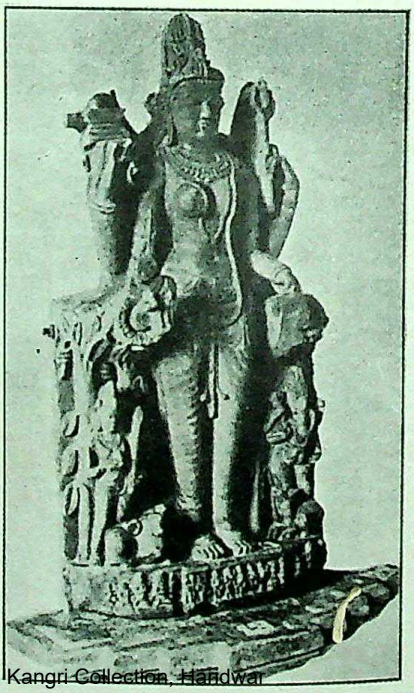

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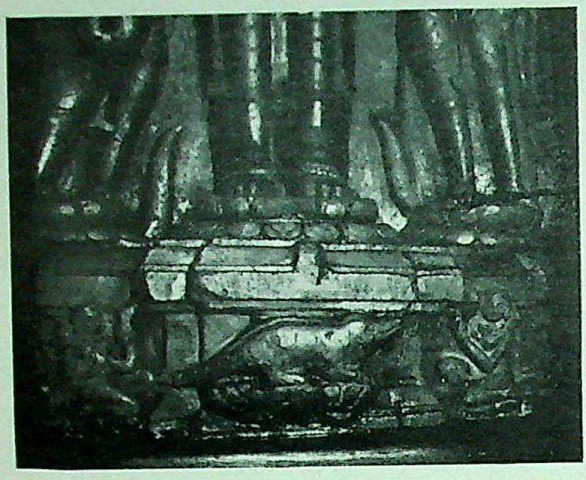

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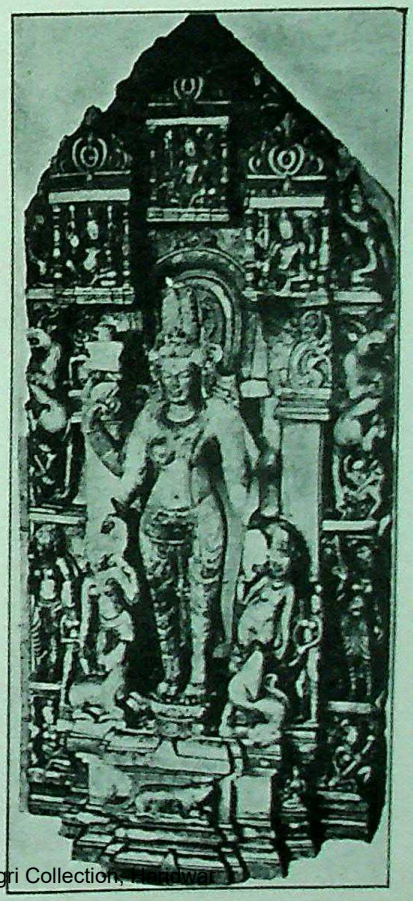

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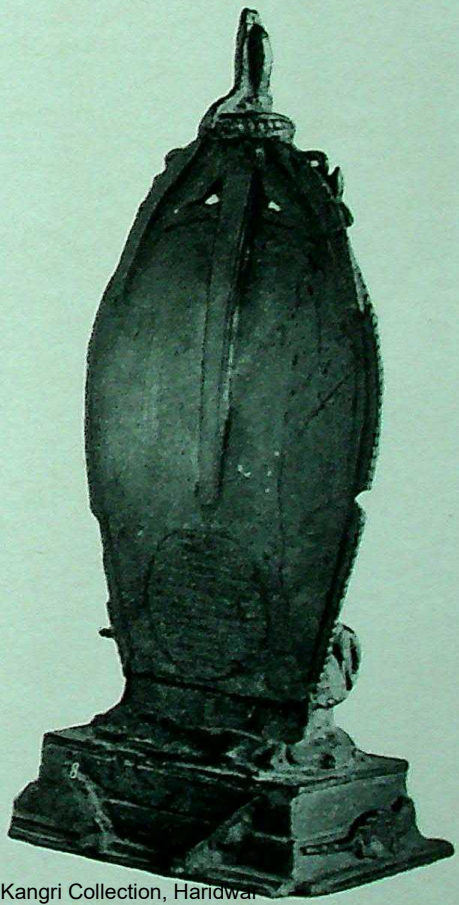

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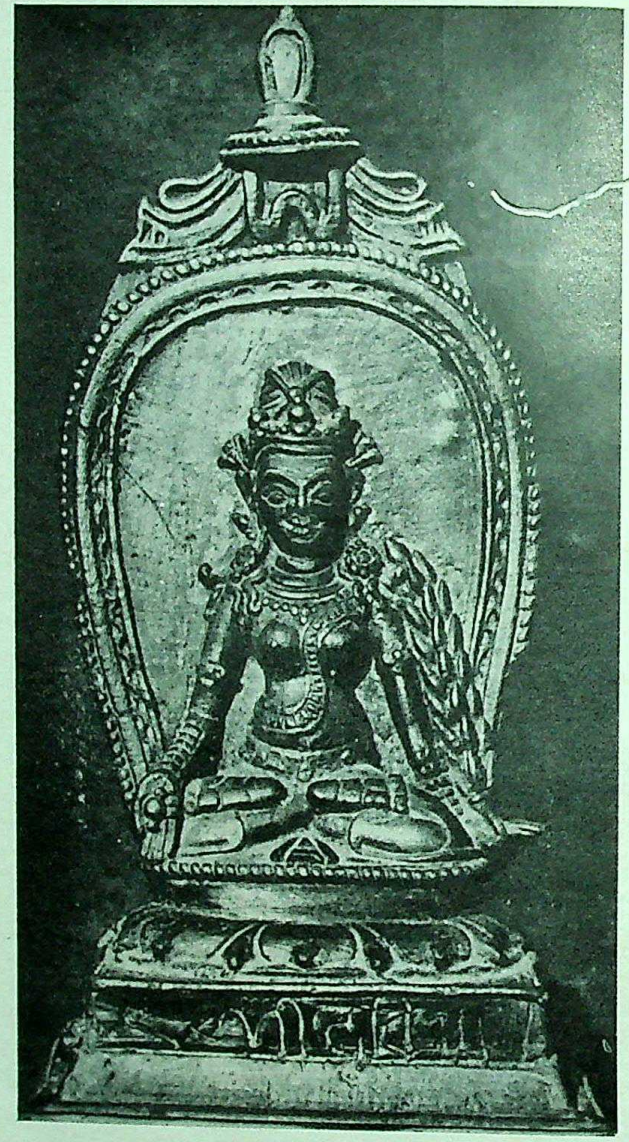

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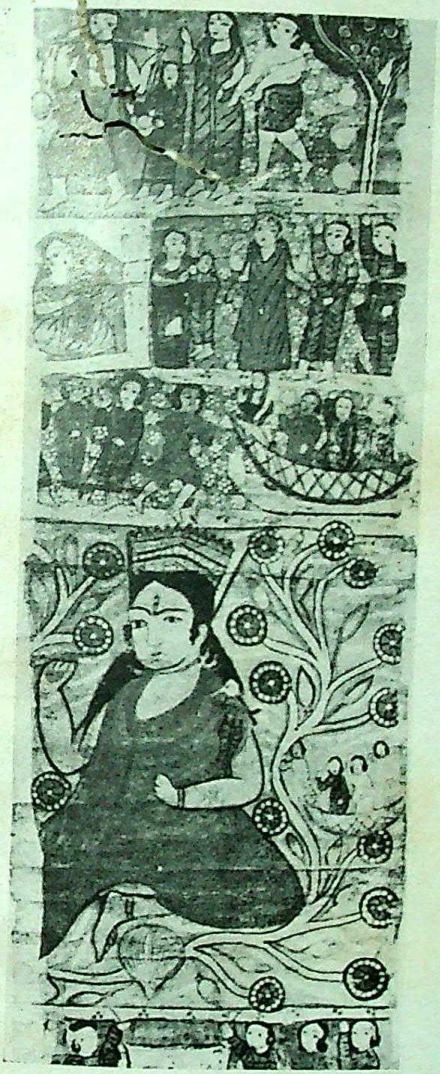

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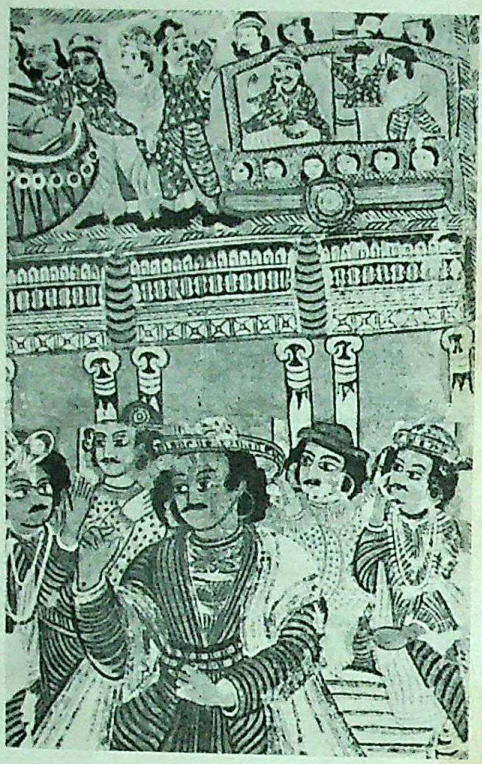

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The author, Somnath Mukhopadhyay, M.A. (Cal), Ph.D. (Cal), is a product of Calcutta University. A devoted student of Indian art and archaeology, he has contributed nearly twentyfive papers in various art and antiquarian journals. At present he is Head of the Department of History of Art, Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta.

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